Police rummage through landfill in search of evidence. PAGE 3
Terlaje: More funding needed to complete CHC underground power system. PAGE 4

Hafa Adai!
$1
Saipan Tribune
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 21
TUESDAY JANUARY 30, 2024
www.saipantribune.com
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KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Charles Lee Dewey III (aka Carter Allen Widmor), a fugitive wanted in Indiana on multiple charges of rape and sexual misconduct of a minor, has been arrested on Saipan where he will remain detained pending extradition.

Man wanted in Indiana on rape charges arrested

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A fugitive wanted in Indiana on multiple charges of rape and sexual misconduct involving minors has been arrested on Saipan, where he will remain detained, pending extradition.

Charles Lee Dewey III, also known as Carter Allen Widmor, was brought before Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho yesterday for a bail hearing.

See MAN on Page 4

Palacios has names to be appointed for the 902 talks team

Palacios

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said Friday they are still working on putting together a team for the planned 902 talks between the CNMI and U.S. governments.

Palacios did acknowledge that retired CNMI Su-

See PALACIOS on Page 4

'CUC's aging accounts receivable increasing; now $97.8M'

» **MOU requiring CHCC to pay $525K monthly is expiring in May 2024**

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s aging accounts receivable is progressively increasing and has now reached $97.8 million, according to acting CUC chief financial officer Rodolfo Urbano on Thursday.

See CUC on Page 4

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Acting Commonwealth Utilities Corp. chief financial officer Rodolfo Urbano, extreme right, discusses his financial report during the CUC board meeting last Thursday.

'Decision on Bermudes' status was made after extensive consideration'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said yesterday that his request on Friday for Clement Bermudes to resign as Department of Public Safety commissioner was done after extensive and careful consideration.

Bermudes

"I did not make this decision lightly," said Palacios in a statement.

He said he appreciates Bermudes' service to DPS and community over the past year and recognizes that he inherited

See BERMUDES on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
If you are looking for a place that serves exquisite cuisine in front of a million-dollar view, then Mariana Lighthouse is perfect for you.
PAGE 11

WORLD
U.S. negotiators are making progress on a potential agreement under which Israel would pause military operations against Hamas in Gaza for two months in exchange for the release of more than 100 hostages.
PAGE 13

LIFE & STYLE
Two climate activists hurled soup Sunday at the glass protecting the "Mona Lisa" at the Louvre Museum in Paris and shouted slogans advocating for a sustainable food system.
PAGE 15

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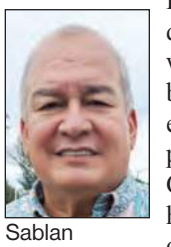
*On approved credit (OAC). Some conditions apply. Doc fees and registration not included. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Vehicles may not be exactly as shown. See dealer for more details. Maximum credit card payment toward vehicle purchase is $2,500. 2024 Mazda CX-5 total price is $26,995 less 20% down payment. Financed at 9.29% APR for 72 monthly payments of $392.38 or $180.82 per paycheck based on 26 pay periods per year. Total deferred price is $33,921.09.

NMI Democrats thank Kilili

In his first floor speech as the newly elected Northern Mariana Islands delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives (111th Congress), Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan affirmed his support for House Resolution 114, which recognized Feb. 4, 2009, as the 23rd National Girls and Women in Sports Day. His speech wasn't flashy and wasn't the stuff of headlines, but it would set the tone for his tenure in office. He was there to do the people's work.

Between his first speech and his most recent one—he introduced the Fostering Family Cohesion Nationwide Act on Nov.15, 2023—that's exactly what he did.

Sablan did not take for granted that he would always be sent back to Washington, D.C. Consequently, he worked doubly hard every time the people of the CNMI gave him their vote of confidence. He ensured that the Northern Mariana Islands had a seat at tables where decisions were made that would affect the people—all the people—of the Northern Marianas. Though he caucused with the Democrats, he was able to work with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to pass legislation vital to the Northern Marianas.


Sablan

It should not go unsaid that serving in elective office requires sacrifice, but it's a sacrifice borne not only by the person who is elected but also by the people closest to them. Thus, we recognize and thank Sablan's wife, Andrea Cunanan Sablan, his children, his father, the late Jesus Diaz Sablan (Jesus Kilili); his mother, Victorina Camacho Sablan; his siblings and extended family who stood with the Congressman and supported him all these years. Because they stood with him, he could go to work every day to stand up for all the families in the CNMI.

"The Democratic Party of the Northern Mariana Islands thanks Congressman Kilili for his service, wishes him the best as he determines his next steps, and looks forward to the ways he will continue to be a voice of reason, a champion of good governance, and an arbiter of common-sense politics in the Northern Marianas," said a news statement from the party. ***(PR)***

Newman: Painting beauty, encouraging art

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

While encouraging other artists to pursue their passions, former Saipan resident Olivia Malit Newman continues to share Saipan's scenic beauty with art lovers and patrons.

Newman, one of 23 artists to display their work at the Organized Brotherhood Relating to Arts Exhibition at Guam's Micronesian Mall, showcased her piece on Managaha Island. The exhibition ended last Dec. 10.

Aligning with the exhibition's theme, "Waves and Strokes," Newman displayed the 24" x 36" acrylic work featuring Saipan's Managaha Island at the exhibition as she considers it one of her favorite pieces.

"I used to live on Saipan for 11 years and I love Managaha, so I was so inspired to do a big painting this time," Newman said.

But Managaha was not the first or last of Newman's take on Saipan. Having already completed two versions of Suicide Cliff, and her piece on Forbidden Island, which have already been sold, she is excited about her most recent piece on Saipan, which features Bird Island.

"Right now, I'm actually in the process of making Bird Island's view. I can't wait for this to finish…" she said.

Newman plans to submit it to one of Guam's exhibitions, and hopefully display it in Hawaii.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Artist and former Saipan resident Olivia Malit-Newman.

"There is always a call for artists here in Guam. Sometimes they'll feature [the work submitted] in Hawaii, Taiwan, or Fiji. This time, after we submit it and if it gets accepted, then they will bring it to Hawaii," she said.

Since landscapes are her favorite pieces, Newman take hikes and observe nature, and later put her observations on a canvas. She said she hopes to convey the beauty of the islands to other art enthusiasts.

"I want to portray the beauty of the islands of Guam and Saipan," she said. "I was born and raised in the Philippines, but it was when I stayed on Saipan and Guam that I learned to appreciate the island sights, appreciate nature, meditate, relax and take care of yourself," she said.

Shortly after college, Newman moved to Saipan, and it became her home for 11 years. It was here where her buried passion for art resurfaced. "[Art] has been my passion since I was in high school. My parents didn't want me to take Fine Arts because they kept saying there's no money in art...I became a dentist [and] moved to Saipan, and then, all of a sudden, I just felt like, why don't I go back to painting? That's my passion anyway and I did it."

After her time on Saipan, and after the loss of her husband, she relocated to Guam in 2008.

Newman has now become a full-time artist and has assumed the lead role in the art group OBRA, or Organized Brotherhood Relating to Arts, since 2014.

With OBRA, she tries to create a platform for other artists to unleash their creativity. "Since the exhibit at the Micronesia Mall, there's a lot of new artists that want to join us. It's going to be more of a time investment for me... [but] I want this group to enjoy what they are doing and I want them to have fun," she said.

Since becoming OBRA's president, Newmam said her

See NEWMAN on Page 4

Police rummage through landfill in search of evidence

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Police officers rummaged through piles of trash at the Marpi Landfill throughout last week in search of evidence believed to be linked to the double homicide case at a Finasisu residence earlier this month.

Saipan Tribune visited the Marpi Landfill last Friday and learned that about 10 to 15 police officers have been rummaging through the garbage from Monday to Thursday in search of evidence.

Saipan Tribune learned that the evidence police were looking for could be involved in the brutal killing of Liu Shuping and Wang Jingdong.

It remains unclear if the police were able to locate anything or what exactly they were looking for.

The Department of Public Safety has yet to issue an official statement on the matter.

According to a previous DPS news release, DPS dispatch received on Jan. 4 at around 10:46am an injured person(s) report at the former Ladera Building along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Finasisu, which used to house a school.

The individual who made the call, a colleague of Liu, said she came to check on Liu as she did not make it to the school where they teach.

The caller immediately sought help in calling police due to language barrier because she said she panicked when she saw a trail of blood leading to the couple's bedroom when she looked through one of the buildings' windows.

Officers arrived at the Ladera Building at approximately 11:02am and discovered an unresponsive Wang and Liu. Both victims were covered in blood while Wang was reportedly lying in a pool of it.

The two were immediately rushed to the Commonwealth Health Center where Wang was pronounced dead, having succumbed to his injuries.

Liu, after fighting for her life for over two days, succumbed to her injuries.

Prior to the murders, the couple had reported a break-in but police have not disclosed what became of that. Police did disclose that they are looking at the break-in as a possible angle in the murders.

DPS continues to investigate the incident.

Anyone who may have any information, no matter how small, are encouraged to call police to report it.

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547
FAX: (670) 234-9537
ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

DONALD BUFTON, Plaintiff, -v- SAMUEL RAYBURN, Defendant.] CIVIL ACTION NO. 04-0043

TWELFTH AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to a Writ of Execution issued by the Court in this matter on October 12, 2007, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property:

Legal description of the property:
Lot no. 012 B 08, situated in Calabera, Saipan Northern Mariana Islands, containing 39,297 square meters, more or less, as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat no. 012 B 01, which was registered with the Land Registry as Document no. 1466 on the 15th of March, 1972.

Total area of the property:
39,297 square meters

Known encumbrances:
The interest to be sold is a fully-prepaid leasehold interest which expires on May 31, 2042. There are no other known valid encumbrances materially affecting title.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The Sale will be held on Friday, February 16, 2024, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public. Copies of a title insurance report for the properties are available to any prospective bidder upon request.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 8th day of January, 2024:

/s/
MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

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SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

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COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY BY FEBRUARY 14, 2024, TO MRS. ZABRINA S. CRUZ VIA EMAIL AT zabrina.shai@becq.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RICHARD V. SALAS
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-009

ROTA WATER CAVE ENCLOSURE/ REPLACEMENT OF WOOD STAIRS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs in Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general, of the installation of a new 2-inch Sch. 40 G.I. Pipes Stairs and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Public Law 20-61.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **150 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 24, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-009, Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Comme cial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 13, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, Project Engineer – via email at edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Terlaje: More funding needed to complete CHC underground power system

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Additional funding is needed to complete the design phase of the project to bury cable lines that supply power to the hospital, according to acting Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Betty G. Terlaje on Thursday.

In her executive director's report during the CUC board's regular meeting, Terlaje said CUC has asked for additional funding from the 404 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to complete the design phase of the underground power project of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Acting Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Betty G. Terlaje discusses her executive report during the CUC board's regular meeting last Thursday.

"So we've been meeting with the CIP [Capital Improvement Projects] Office to get that funding," Terlaje said. She did not specify the amount needed.

As for CUC Tinian's Underground Power Project for critical loads, Terlaje disclosed that there was a pre-bid meeting two weeks ago. She said a mandatory site inspection was done that same day of the meeting.

"I think it's moving along now and hopefully we'll construct soon, Terlaje said.

CUC plans to bury sections of the power system on Saipan and Tinian to protect them from being damaged by strong typhoons.

In 2019, then-CUC executive director Gary P. Camacho said the plan to install an underground cable from Power Plant 1 in Lower Base to the Commonwealth Health Center will cost approximately $23 million.

Camacho said the plan to put an underground cable from CUC's substation in Chalan Kiya to the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport has an estimated cost of $32 million.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is funding the study on the costs and feasibility of the projects.

On Tinian, he said, the plan to have an underground power cable from the power plant to the Tinian Health Center has an estimated cost of $2 million.

BERMUDES

From page 1

tremendous challenges in taking over DPS.

"As this is a personnel matter, I will not comment further," the governor said.

Bermudes resigned from his post Friday afternoon shortly after Palacios instructed him to do so. He said in a comment that he personally did not want to resign.

The CNMI Senate unanimously confirmed Bermudes' appointment in April 2023. Bermudes is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel. Before being appointed DPS commissioner, he had just been promoted dean of the Northern Marianas College Academic Program and Services. He used to chair NMC's Criminal Justice Department.

Last Dec. 23, Palacios wrote Bermudes to express concern over the commissioner's "inconsistency in following [Palacios'] instructions" over an issue involving Sgt. Peter Camacho. Palacios had instructed Bermudes to reassign Camacho to the Marianas Regional Fusion Center at the CNMI Department of Homeland Security, but Bermudes did not do that.

Palacios said yesterday that he has enlisted the assistance of retired police official Anthony Macaranas, whom he described as a "highly respected individual with an extensive law enforcement background," to serve as acting commissioner.

He said Macaranas will help provide stability and direction and take over management responsibilities at DPS while the administration searches for a new and permanent commissioner.

The governor said Macaranas will be supported by other law enforcement agency leaders.

Kaye Inos, who is the DPS director of Administrative Service, became the acting DPS commissioner during the immediate transition period. Palacios said Inos will now return to her regular duties.

"I ask for the community's patience and prayers as we navigate the months ahead and steer a new course for one of our government's most critical departments," Palacios said.

PALACIOS

From page 1

preme Court chief justice Jose S. Dela Cruz is an extremely knowledgeable person in terms of the CNMI's political history ("he will be valuable"), but refused to comment "right now" whether he is considering appointing him to the CNMI 902 team.

The Covenant that created the unique relationship between the CNMI and United States provides for the 902 talks every 10 years—if either government calls for it to consult on issues affecting their relationship.

Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) had urged Palacios to consider appointing Dela Cruz as a member, if not the lead counsel, of the Commonwealth's legal team for the 902 talks.

Babauta said Dela Cruz's "expertise, experience, and dedication will be invaluable assets in securing a fair and beneficial agreement for the CNMI and its future generations."

Palacios said he wants to put together a team composed of representatives from the Legislature, Judiciary, business or private sector, and community. The governor hinted that he already has a roster of names, but he needs to personally call them before revealing who they are.

He said his administration wants to have discussions on what issues they want to bring to the table.

"This is something that we need to put our thoughts together and make it impactful for our community, not just for the present but for tomorrow," the governor said, adding that he has ideas on some issues that have to be taken up during the 902 consultative discussions.

Last Oct. 24, the CNMI Senate unanimously adopted Senate Joint Resolution 23-05, which Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) had introduced, to ask U.S. President Joe Biden and Palacios to consult on a number of subjects, as provided in Section 902 of the Covenant that established the CNMI's relationship with the United States. The House of Representatives adopted the resolution last Nov. 6.

CUC

From page 1

In his financial report during a CUC board meeting, Urbano said majority of the aging accounts receivable—at 62%—is from the CNMI's lone hospital, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

The remaining 38% is shared by the CNMI central government at 12%; residential and commercial customers, 11% each; and the Commonwealth Ports Authority and other government agencies, at 2% each.

CHCC's last payment for utility billings, covering the period for November 2023, was received on Jan. 17, 2024, Urbano said, who added that the memorandum of understanding that requires CHCC to pay CUC $525,000 a month will soon expire on May 15, 2024.

Acting CUC executive director Betty G. Terlaje acknowledged that CHCC is paying, but just late.

"They've just basically moved their due date," she said.

CUC and CHCC signed the MOU in May 2023 in a bid to resolve the hospital's unpaid utility bills, which was already in the millions. Under the MOU, CHCC agrees to resume paying its monthly bills, starting with its April 2023 utility bill of about $525,000. CUC will continue to make regular, timely, and continuous payment, like any regular paying utility consumers. If CHCC fails, reneges, or defaults on the MOU, CUC will disconnect utilities of CHCC's facilities.

The agreement also requires CUC and CHCC to continue ongoing negotiations to settle $53 million in the hospital's outstanding arrears—overdue electric, water, wastewater, and late fees.

Urbano said everything is up to date regarding CUC's accounts payable, as every expenditure is budgeted and accounted for.

"Payables are current and vendors are paid on time," he said.

As for the CUC's overall financial standing, Urbano said billing revenues and expenditures have been averaging $9 million to $10 million in the past three months.

As for CUC's budget, Urbano said it's only the first quarter of the fiscal year so they don't see any substantial impact. He said actual expenses are within the budget.

As of Dec. 31, 2023, CUC has a cash balance of $56.3 million, broken down into $24.2 million in unrestricted cash and $32.1 million in restricted cash, Urbano said.

The $24.2 million in unrestricted cash is composed of accounts payable, purchase orders and contracts, annual leave, payroll reserve, and reserved for other balance sheet obligations.

The $32.1 million in restricted cash is reserved for engine maintenance, for CUC projects, American Rescue Plan Act projects, and restricted by local and federal laws.

MAN

From page 1

Dewey, who has been going by the alias Widmor since he fled the state of Indiana to Saipan back in 2022, was arrested last Jan. 26 pursuant to a joint apprehension mission between federal and local law enforcement agencies. He was arrested at the Kagman Community Health Center where he works.

According to court documents, Dewey fled Indiana where he has over six outstanding arrest warrants on multiple cases involving rape, sexual misconduct with minors, sexual battery, child solicitation, possession of child pornography, dissemination of matter harmful to a minor, and more.

The charges against Dewey date as far back as 2020.

During his hearing yesterday, Dewey, through his lawyer, assistant public defender Emily Thompson, waived his right to an extradition hearing, allowing the state of Indiana to pursue extradition as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the court imposed a $500,000 bail on Dewey before ordering that he be remanded back to Department of Corrections custody where he will remain until he is extradited.

Assistant attorney general Heather Barcinas informed the court that the extradition process could take up to 45 days as the extradition letter must go through the Indiana governor.

The court ordered Dewey to return to court on Feb. 14 for a status conference to discuss updates on his extradition.

According to court documents, the U.S. Marshals Service District of the Northern Mariana Islands received last Jan. 8 a request from the Northern District of Indiana, Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force, in locating and apprehending Dewey. Great Lake's RFTF shared that their information showed that Dewey has been residing on Saipan.

On Jan. 19, U.S. Homeland Security Investigations met with the Department of Public Safety and informed them that they believed to have located Dewey, who has been using the alias Carter Allen Widmor.

HSI managed to get a copy of Dewey's license under the alias Widmor and it matched a photo taken of Dewey in the state of Indiana.

A media search was also conducted on the alias Dewey was using and one photo of him with staff at the Eucon International School where he previously taught English classes surfaced. However, law enforcement determined on Jan. 24 that Dewey was no longer employed or associated with Eucon.

Later, law enforcement learned that Dewey frequents another school. Through their cooperation, law enforcement learned that Dewey applied for a position with the school and photos provided by the school helped identify the fugitive.

On Jan. 26, law enforcement learned that Dewey was employed at the Kagman Health Center and a briefing was held in preparation for his apprehension.

That same day, at around 2:35pm, law enforcement officers went to the Kagman Health Center and met with Dewey in his office. Dewey allegedly admitted to officers his real name and he was immediately arrested.

He was charged with one count of fugitive from justice and was booked and detained at DOC.

NEWMAN

From page 3

goal is shorter meetings, less talk and more paintings. "So we did it. And most artists like that because they cannot paint at home or at school, and they want to see other artists' work so they can learn from them, and share, so it's really a good inspiration and exposure."

Aside from Newman, other artists featured at the OBRA exhibit were Maila Pujol, Marcial Pontillas, Richelle Canto, Maria Fitzpatrck, Grace Gueco, Andrew Gulac, Yeon Sook Park, Paul Mendiola, Marcus Villaverde, Novem Gimoto, Sharon Cardona, Gisela Guile, Ehrian Marquez, Lolit Poblete, Rachael Nussbaum, Renee Veksler, Karen De Waal, Stephanie Quitugua, Viola Roces, Angel Piper, Maggie Clark, and Zamie Zamora. Their art combined gave the exhibit an impressive 50 pieces.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Fil-American Lions Club members with Ernie Molina and CHCC Nursing director Grace Laxina.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Front, Nursing director Grace Laxina, Saipan Fil-American Lions Club president Socorro Huliganga, and members. Behind the counter, Pediatric Ward manager Jeanneth Muyalde and Dr. Michael Pham with social workers and pediatric nurses.

Lions Club donates educational supplies to Pediatric Ward

Last Jan. 25, 2024, members of the Saipan Fil-American Lions Club donated educational supplies to the Pediatric Ward of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. as part of the Lions Club's community outreach project.

The patients in the Pediatric Ward need some light activities that are vital for their early recovery and the supplies that we provided are very helpful and essentials such as sketch pads, coloring books, puzzles, coloring pencils, among others.

Club president Socorro Huliganga said the supplies might last a few months and the Saipan Fil-American Lions Club is willing to replenish the supplies.

Pediatrics is the branch of medicine that involves the medical care of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

Saipan Fil-American Lions Club service chair Annamae Adaza coordinated with Ernie Molina for the donation presentation and it was received by CHCC Nursing director Grace Laxina, together with Pediatric Ward manager Jeanneth Muyalde, Dr. Michael Pham, social workers, and pediatric nurses.

If you wish to join the club, you can call Huliganga at (670) 989-6407 and the secretary Gemabelle Aringo at (670) 287-9805. For more information, click on their website: www.lionsclubs.org. ***(PR)***

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

5.1-magnitude earthquake in Fais

At 11:59am on Jan. 27, 2024, a 5.1- magnitude earthquake occurred near Fais, Micronesia. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. **(PR)**

4.8-magnitude earthquake in Dededo

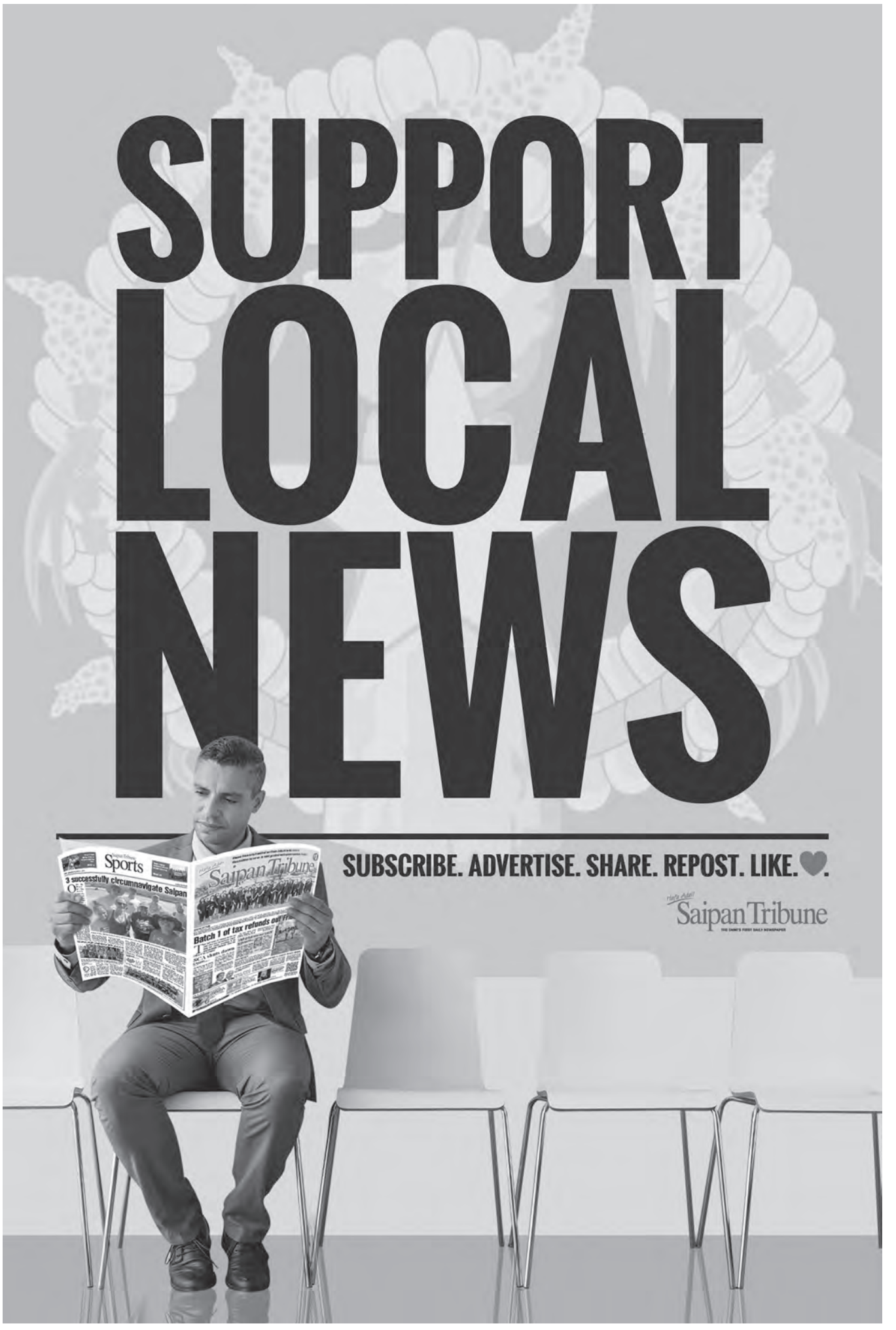
At 11:36pm on Jan. 25 2024, a report of a 4.8-magnitude earthquake occurred in Dededo Village, Guam. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

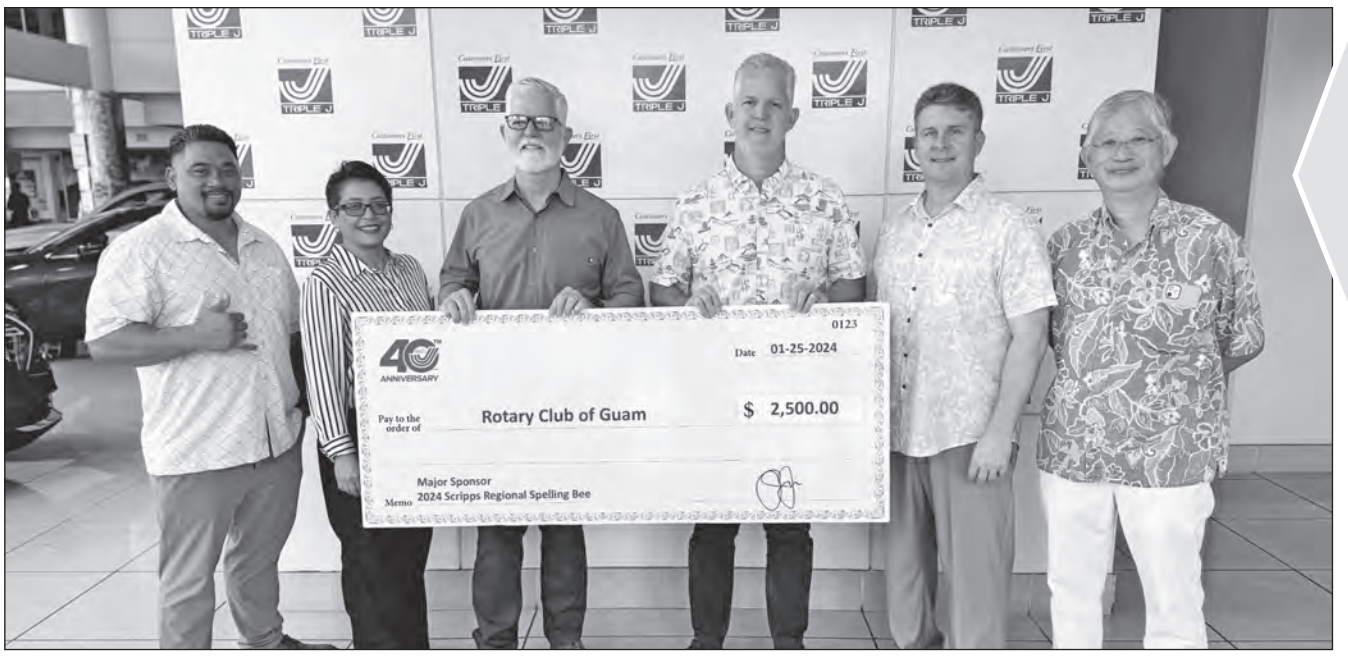
For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

6.2-magnitude earthquake in Pagan

At 1:48am on Jan. 21 2024, a report of a 6.2-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***





CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Present for the check presentation are representatives from the Rotary Club of Guam and Triple J Enterprises, Inc. Standing left to right, Royden Fernandez, Rotary Club of Guam Vocational Service director; Rotary Club of Guam president Erika Garrido; Triple J president and COO Jeff Jones; Triple J senior VP Jay Jones; Rotary Club of Guam vice president Brad Kloppenburg; and Rotary Club of Guam member and Spelling Bee coordinator Gerald Woo.

Triple J donates $2,500 for Guam Scripps Spelling Bee

TUMON, Guam—In a significant gesture of support for education and community enrichment, Triple J Enterprises, Inc. presented a check for $2,500 to the Rotary Club of Guam, the regional partner for the 52nd Annual Guam Regional Scripps Spelling Bee, for Major Sponsorship of the 2024 Scripps Regional Spelling Bee.

Jeff Jones, president and COO of Triple J Enterprises, expressed his enthusiasm for contributing to such a valuable educational initiative, stating, "At Triple J, we believe in empowering the youth and fostering a love for language and learning. Supporting the Guam Regional Scripps Spelling Bee aligns with our commitment to educational excellence and community development."

Erika Garrido, president of the Rotary Club of Guam, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in enhancing students' language skills and vocabulary. "The Spelling Bee is not just a competition; it's a platform that helps students improve spelling, increase vocabularies, and develop crucial language skills that last a lifetime. We are grateful for the continued support from Triple J Enterprises and all our sponsors," Woo remarked.

The Guam Regional Scripps Spelling Bee has been a hallmark event for 52 years, providing a platform for students to showcase their linguistic prowess. In 2023, the competition featured 63 spellers from 62 schools, and this year anticipates over 70 spellers representing 70 schools from the Pacific region.

Jay Jones, senior VP of Triple J Enterprises, added, "We are honored to be part of an event that encourages academic excellence and language proficiency among the youth. Triple J is committed to supporting initiatives that contribute to the growth and development of our community."

The event is scheduled to take place on Sunday, March 3, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Guam. The 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee, the nation's largest and longest-running educational program, will be held during the week of Memorial Day 2024 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland.

For further information on the 2024 Scripps Guam Regional Spelling Bee, please contact guamspellingbee@gmail.com.

Aside from Triple J Enterprises, other sponsors of the 2024 Scripps Guam Regional Spelling Bee include BankPacific, ASC Trust, Ivy Education Services, Hyatt, Micronesian Divers Association, AB Risk Solutions, and Pacific Daily News.

Celebrating its 40th Anniversary of serving island communities, Triple J group of companies has several major operations, which include the Triple J Auto Group, which represents Ford, Lincoln, Mazda, Honda, Acura, Kia, and a used car dealership. Triple J Commercial Tire, which services passenger cars, light trucks, and a full range of commercial vehicles and equipment. Triple J Rentals, the licensee for Hertz & Dollar Rent a Car on Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Palau. Triple J Five Star Wholesale Foods, the distributor of high‚Äêquality food items including Certified Angus Beef, Hawaii Water, and Tyson food products. And Triple J Restaurant Group, which owns and operates Outback Steakhouse in Guam.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee, established in 1925, is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program. Dedicated to helping students improve their spelling, increase vocabularies, and develop correct English usage, the Spelling Bee has become a celebrated platform for academic excellence and language proficiency. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Department of Public Works
Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

NOTICE TO ADJACENT LANDOWNERS SURROUNDING THE PROPOSED ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT OF ROUTE 310 (TAPOCHAU ROAD) AND ROUTE 38 (CHALAN GALAIDE/NAVY HILL ROAD)

APPLICANT: CNMI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
PROJECT: TAPOCHAU ROAD AND CHALAN GALAIDE/NAVY HILL ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
COASTAL PERMIT # SMS-2024-024

The CNMI Department of Public Works submitted a Major Siting application to the Division of Coastal Resources Management for the improvement of Tapochau Road and the Chalan Galaide/Navy Hill Road on 23 January 2024.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Route 310 (Tapochao Road) A 2.1-mile section of coral road (Route 310/Tapochau Road) would be paved and upgraded with safety measures. The improved road would consist of a 22-foot-wide travel lane with a 4-foot paved shoulder on each side; curb, gutter, and sidewalk at left side; and drainage system. The improved road would also consist of multiple interface connections and driveways to the adjacent properties. The new pavement would be asphalt with complete base and sub-base fill materials. The road improvement limits extend the full width of 60 feet for Right-of-Way (ROW) to address roadway structures, inclusive of pavement, base and sub-base, drainage conveyance, ponding basins, curb and gutter, traffic signs, markings, and roadside safety. Construction activities would include clearing and grubbing, road grading and bed preparation, and subsequent paving of the road. All proposed road improvements would occur within the ROW that has been delineated in the engineering design plans.

In order to meet Federal roadway design guidelines that address the management of surface water runoff and drainages, two ponding basins were incorporated into the Route 310 (Tapochau Road) design plans.

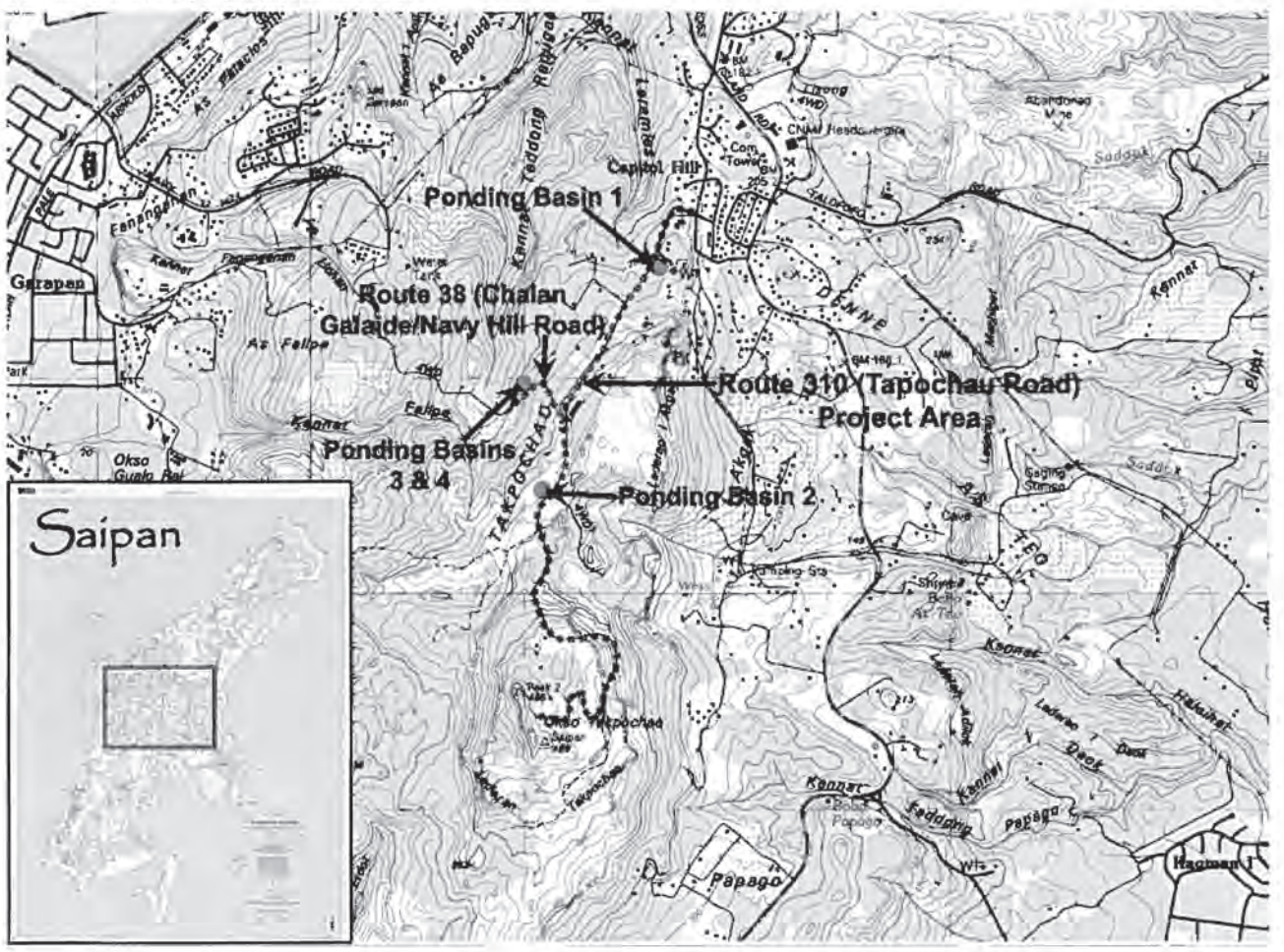
Route 38 (Chalan Galaide/Navy Hill Road) A 0.25-mile section of coral road (Route 38/Chalan Galaide/Navy Hill Road) would be paved and upgraded with safety measures. The improved road would consist of a 20- foot-wide travel lane with a 4-foot concrete swale. The new pavement would be asphalt with complete base and sub-base fill materials. Construction activities would include clearing and grubbing, road grading and bed preparation, and subsequent paving of the road. All proposed road improvements would occur within the ROW that has been delineated in the engineering design plans.

In order to meet Federal roadway design guidelines that address the management of surface water runoff and drainages, two ponding basins were incorporated into the Route 38 (Chalan Galaide/Navy Hill Road) design plans

This notice is being issued to comply with NMIAC § 15-10-206(e)(2)(i) "Alternative Adjacent Property Owner Notification".

Written comments can be submitted by mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, or emailed to permitting@d-crm.gov.mp.

Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300 if you have any questions or would like more information on the Route 310 (Tapochau Road) and Route 38 (Chalan Galaide/Navy Hill) Improvement Project.



UOG Philosophy program hosts 'Our Island, Our Future' youth camp

UOG

University of Guam English professor Teresita Perez engages with "Our Island, Our Future" youth camp participants in their "My Favorite Thing" activity to reflect on the interconnected nature of self, community, and environment. UOG's Philosophy Program held the youth camp in December 2023 with the theme "Our Island, Our Future."

UOG

Participants of the "Our Island, Our Future" youth camp gather to show their "kintsugi" projects after discussing the value of imperfection and the beauty of used objects. UOG's Philosophy Program held the youth camp in December 2023 with the theme "Our Island, Our Future."

UOG

Dr. Jonathan Wurtz, University of Guam philosophy professor, leads campers in creating a web of life to reflect on the interconnectedness of nature. UOG's Philosophy Program held the youth camp in December 2023 with the theme "Our Island, Our Future."

The University of Guam's Philosophy Program offered a youth camp in December 2023 with the theme "Our Island, Our Future."

The day camp was aimed at helping Guam's future generations take an active role in shaping the island's future.

The camp's two week-long sessions were provided free of charge and encouraged children ages 8 to 13 to think about questions revolving around Guam and its future—through fun and engaging activities.

The camp fostered conversation topics such as one's identity; the relationship between self and community; the interconnectedness of self, nature, and communities; environmental ethics; and technology and social media.

The camp also promoted intergenerational philosophical conversations through four "at-home" activities that campers and their parents collaboratively engaged in.

Camp success and support

Post-camp surveys report that more than 80% of participating campers made friends, had good conversations, engaged in fun activities, and gained a better understanding of philosophy. Moreover, 100% of participating parents felt that the camp encouraged important discussions about Guam and its future and agreed that the "at-home activities" helped generate intergenerational conversations.

The camp was free of charge, thanks to sponsorships and donations made by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Humanities Guåhan, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences UOG, the UOG Global Learning and Engagement Office, and the Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization. Lunches were sponsored by Raising Cane's, Market Deli, and Jamaican Grill. The camp was directed by Dr. Jonathan Wurtz and facilitated by Dr. Brett Fulkerson-Smith, both UOG Philosophy professors. The camp was also facilitated by current UOG students, Kyra Perez, Arielle Candelario, Chloe Calvo, and Hunter Sidell. ***(UOG)***

UOG experts contribute insight on building resilience in US climate-change report

UOG

University of Guam associate professor of geography Romina King.

UOG

University of Guam associate professor of surface water hydrology Myeong-ho Yeo.

UOG

University of Guam Marine Laboratory director Laurie Raymundo.

Pacific island ecosystems, cultural resources, infrastructure, human health, and livelihood are all at risk of degradation because of climate change, but Pacific Island communities can build resilience through actions driven by local and indigenous knowledge.

This assessment is part of the recently released Fifth U.S. National Climate Assessment—a comprehensive report on climate change risks, impacts, and responses delivered to Congress and the U.S. president every four years. It is authored and reviewed by scientists, scholars, and public servants across the nation, including University of Guam faculty, who were among the 16 authors and 41 technical contributors who produced a chapter on Hawai'i and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands.

"It is becoming increasingly evident that overall human well-being is threatened by climate change," said Dr. Romina King, UOG associate professor of geography and one of the authors for the regional chapter. "As island communities, we must always be prepared to face these unfortunate new realities, and it starts with staying informed. We hope the information we have curated for this report will be an effective resource in the decision-making process."

King serves as the UOG lead for the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center, which has also provided support for the chapter. Other UOG personnel who provided technical contributions to the chapter include Dr. Laurie Raymundo, director of the UOG Marine Laboratory, Dr. Myeong-ho Yeo, associate professor of surface water hydrology, and PI-CASC Guam communications coordinator John I. Borja.

The regional chapter emphasizes that:

- Climate change impairs access to healthy food and water. Increasing temperatures, altered rainfall, flooding, pollution, and fisheries decline will further affect food and water availability.
- Climate change undermines human health. Climate shocks and stressors compromise health care and worsen long-standing social and economic inequities that contribute to illness, but community strengths and adaptation measures can boost resilience.
- Rising sea levels harm infrastructure and island economies. Sea level rise intensifies loss of territory and disrupts livelihoods. Governments and communities are innovating through renewable energy, green infrastructure, and sustainable economic growth.
- Responses help to safeguard tropical ecosystems and biodiversity. Increased fire risk, severe droughts, and ocean changes have broad negative impacts on native plants and wildlife, and ocean ecosystems. Effective adaptation strategies include ecosystem protection and restoration, invasive species measures, and fire prevention.
- Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems are central to the resilience of island communities amidst the changing climate.

The assessment demonstrates that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit climate change impacts are underway in every U.S. region, including the Pacific islands.

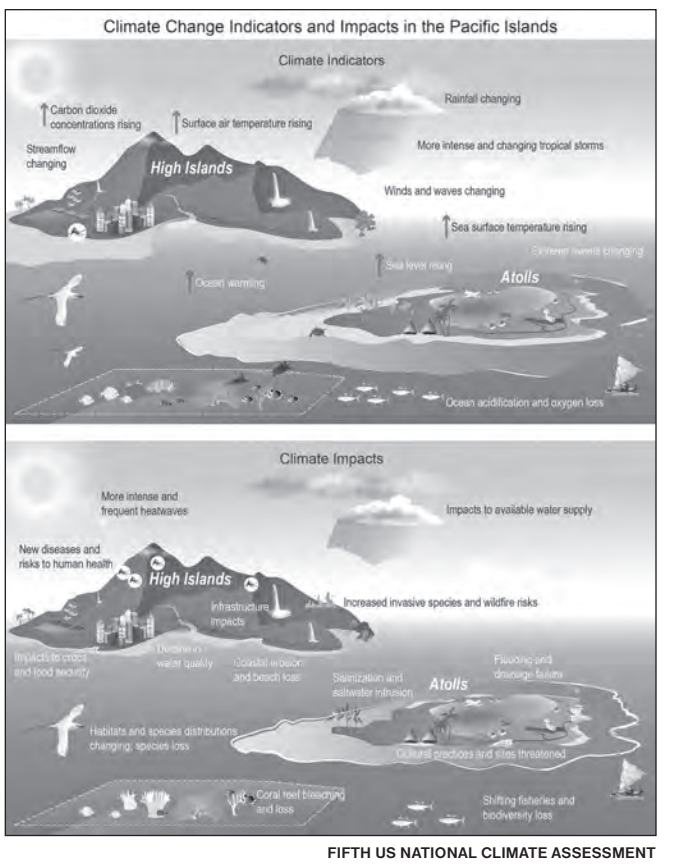
A key addition to the National Climate Assessment since its last edition in 2018 is the chapter's key message on human health and its emphasis on food security, integration of Indigenous knowledge, and recognition of data inequities for the Pacific islands and U.S. Caribbean.

The full National Climate Assessment is published as an interactive website at nca2023.globalchange.gov and Chapter 30: Hawai'i and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands at nca2023.globalchange.gov/chapter/30.

Additionally, an informational webinar on the Hawai'i and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands chapter will be held at 9am ChST on Feb. 14. Register to attend free of charge at https://url.uog.edu/ethtJo.

About the Fifth National Climate Assessment

Mandated in the Global Change Research Act of 1990, the National Climate Assessment provides authoritative scientific information about climate change risks, impacts, and responses in the United States. The assessment reflects the scientific consensus and is widely used for decision-making but does not include policy recommendations nor advocate for any specific policy. ***(UOG)***


Climate Change Indicators and Impacts in the Pacific Islands
Climate Indicators
Carbon dioxide concentrations rising
Surface air temperature rising
Rainfall changing
Streamflow changing
More intense and changing tropical storms
High Islands
Winds and waves changing
Sea surface temperature rising
Ocean warming
Sea level rising
Atolls
Ocean acidification and oxygen loss
Climate Impacts
More intense and frequent heatwaves
Impacts to available water supply
New diseases and risks to human health
High Islands
Increased invasive species and wildfire risks
Infrastructure impacts
Impacts to crops and food security
Declines in water quality
Coastal erosion and beach loss
Salinization and saltwater intrusion
Atolls
Flooding and drainage failure
Habitats and species distributions changing; species loss
Cultural practices and sites threatened
Coral reef bleaching and loss
Shifting fisheries and biodiversity loss

FIFTH US NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Changes in climate (top panel), including sea level rise, ocean warming, changes in extreme weather, and increased tropical cyclone intensity, result in impacts and risks (lower panel) for Pacific Island environments and communities.

Opinion

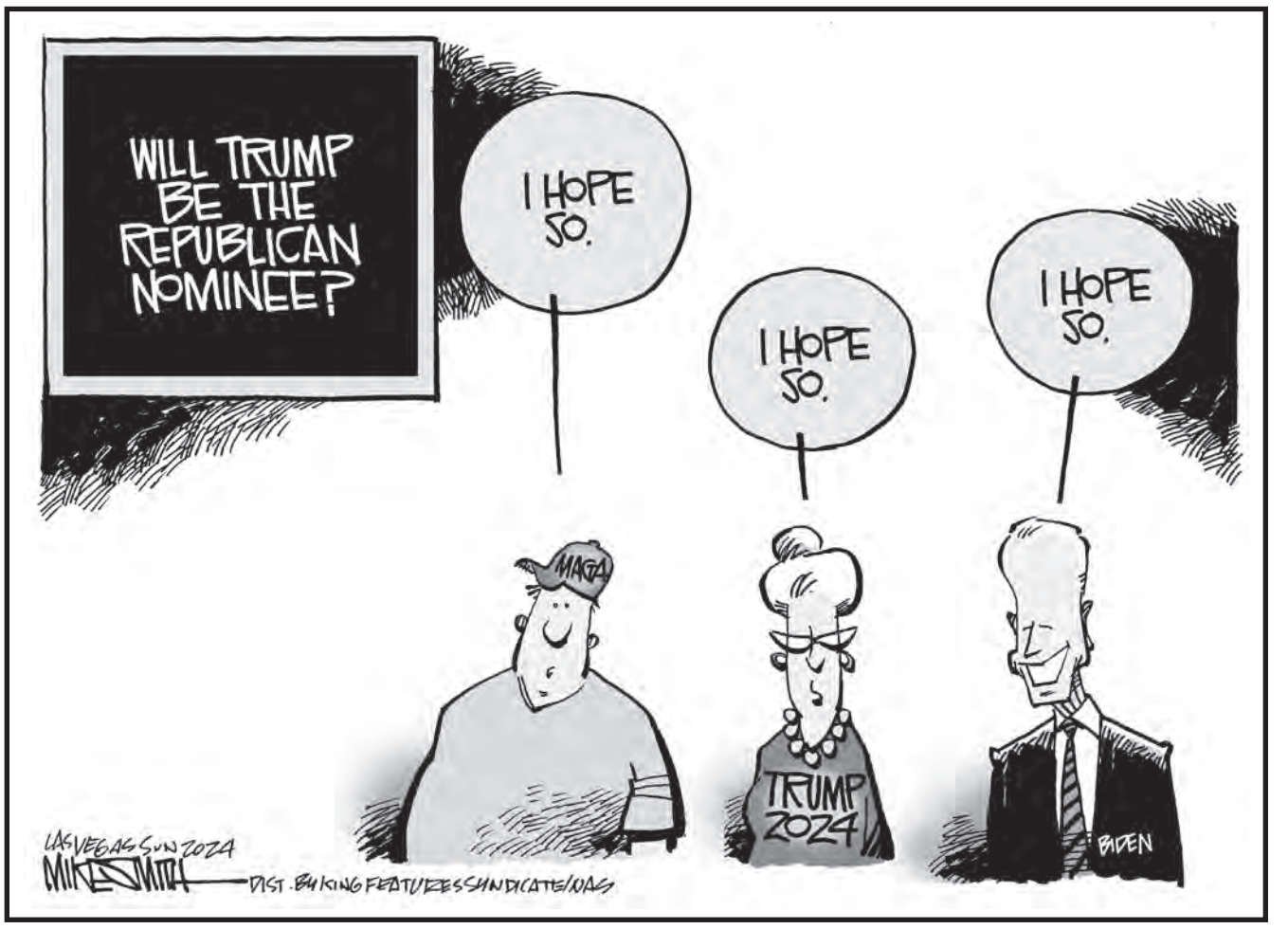
Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 21

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association



EDITORIAL

Tentative child tax credit deal would help both working families and the economy

It isn't often that a shift in federal tax policy has an immediate, positive and widespread impact on America's struggling working families. And it's perhaps even more rare in today's fractious political environment that both parties can get together to make that happen.

Yet it appears Congress is headed toward exactly that kind of breakthrough with a plan to revive the Biden administration's pandemic-era child tax credits—a brief policy that ushered in an unprecedented reduction in child poverty levels before it was allowed to expire two years ago. Bringing it back would help both working families and the broader economy.

The child tax credit as applied prior to its pandemic expansion provided taxpayers with children up to $2,000 off their tax bills. But the credit wasn't fully "refundable," meaning lower-income families that paid little or nothing in taxes couldn't fully access it.

The result was a tilt in benefits toward the wealthy. The Brookings Institute estimated that prior to its pandemic expansion, about 40% of the child tax credit benefits went to households with incomes above $100,000, with only about 15% of those benefits going to households with under $30,000 income.

The Biden administration's American Rescue Plan in 2021 boosted the child tax credit to a maximum of $3,600 and—crucially—made it fully refundable, meaning families that earned too little to owe taxes still received the full benefit.

The results were epic. The policy ushered in a record low in America's child-poverty level, to just 5.2%. When Congress allowed the expanded tax credit to expire at the end of 2021, that rate shot back up above 12%.

The current measure would restore the fully refundable tax credits (though at lower levels than the earlier boost) and would revive some expired Trump administration business tax cuts.

Co-sponsored by Missouri Republican Rep. Jason Smith, who chairs the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, the $78 billion proposal has about as much bipartisan muscle behind it as anything pending in Washington these days.

The White House supports the legislation. Smith's committee last week passed the measure overwhelmingly and it's expected to be taken up by the full House in the coming weeks.

The nature of opposition to the measure says as much as its support.

Some progressive Democrats are opposed, saying the benefits to lower-income families don't go far enough and that the Trump business tax cuts shouldn't be revived. They have a point on both fronts, but that's why it's called compromise.

Some House MAGA nihilists are likely to oppose it as well based on its price tag and their aversion to giving President Joe Biden any kind of policy win in an election year—never mind that it would be a win for millions of American children as well.

See TENTATIVE on Page 9

It's 2024 and the battle for democracy in the US continues

By PAT MERLOE
The Fulcrum

Pat Merloe provides strategic advice on democracy and elections to U.S. and international organizations. He is a former director of election integrity programs at the nonpartisan National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

The U.S. political environment is suffering from toxic polarization, with election deniers constantly spewing noxious vapors to negate belief in the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election, the integrity of election administration, and the honorableness of their political opponents. The constant pollution has blinded many from seeing the real state of things and is causing others to close their eyes to avoid the irritation. The resulting diminished public confidence and perhaps participation in elections creates more precarious conditions in 2024 than it faced in 2020 and 2022.

I've learned an important lesson from observing elections in more than 50 countries: Even when elections are credible, if a large segment of the population is made to believe otherwise their outcome and the fate of democracy can easily be placed in jeopardy. Unfortunately, that is a central feature of the present electoral circumstance, and concerted action is needed to mitigate that damage and prevent it from worsening.

The likely, if not inevitable, injections of poisonous targeting, deep fakes and other AI-aided attempts at creating information disorder – generated by domestic actors who believe it will aid their essentially authoritarian cause and by foreign advisories that are locked into extraordinary high stakes competition with the United States – are also going to make 2024 elections more risky. Their messages will be honed to different communities and demographic groups to maximize toxic effects.

Increase positive messaging

Proactive outreach is essential to mitigate the immediate effects of the toxicity and for an environmental cleanup in the longer run. Mobilizing multigenerational, trusted voices at the national, local and micro levels and helping them reach out will be necessary on a scale not previously seen. Everyone's voice needs to be raised in 2024 – with those we know and others we can reach – in defense of credible election processes, for active participation, and for democratic governance. Because ultimately we influence each other.

That challenge requires planning and action by community groups, religious and labor leaders, service organizations, bar associations, community technologists, online communicators, traditional media and election authorities.

Such efforts are underway by nonpartisan initiatives in key states like Courrier Newsroom, Votebeat and Keep Our Republic, by some election administrators, and by various grassroots organizations. But, we need to think of the 1960s efforts of major civil rights organizations around the Voter Education Project, add modern communications platforms, expand and move ahead vigorously to reach millions of people.

Beware election vigilantes

Election "vigilantism" is another manifestation of toxic polarization.

Extreme forms of it were demonstrated in 2020 by armed videographers who filmed Arizona voters depositing ballots in official dropboxes. And now we witness by death threats and "swatting" that target election officials and judges who have defended legitimate vote counts and impartial application of the law to election violators. Protections need to be strengthened for election and judicial officers along with significant penalties for harassment of officials and voters.

Other forms of election vigilantism include disruptive and unjustifiably aggressive actions by some partisan poll watchers and "challengers," particularly concerning voter registration, voting and ballot counting. There is a national effort by election deniers to recruit, train and deploy zealous partisan poll watchers that amassed perhaps 20,000 people across the United States in 2022 and which is looking to expand its numbers in 2024. There is a real risk that such actors could play harmful roles in the upcoming elections.

Support election officials

To mitigate potentials for electoral process disruptions and voter intimidation, election officials need to require training (including codes of conduct) for parties, candidates and others who are to serve as poll watchers, "challengers" or observers. The Bipartisan Policy Center's Policy on Good Faith Election Observation provides constructive, detailed approaches to address this. Another antitoxin to election vigilantism is nonpartisan election observation based on internationally recognized principles organized by respected groups like The Carter Center.

Two years of steady harassment of many election officials and numerous frivolous information requests and lawsuits have led to a large number of officials resigning and a potential shortage of poll workers on Election Day. The resulting gaps in experi-

See IT'S on Page 9

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What butt lifts and boogers can teach us about book bans

By ALVIN IRBY
The Fulcrum

Alvin Irby is founder and executive director at Barbershop Books and a public voices fellow on racial justice in early childhood of The OpEd Project in partnership with the National Black Child Development Institute.

Toby Price, an assistant principal in Mississippi, was fired from his elementary school last year for reading the children's book "I Need a New Butt." In this silly story, a boy discovers "a crack" in his butt and sets off on an imaginative journey to find a new butt because he's convinced that his butt is "broken."

As the publisher of a children's book about a little boy who loves to eat his boogers, I have grown accustomed to receiving occasional feedback from husbands who took my booger book, "Gross Greg," home to elated children and the chagrin of their unsuspecting wives. You don't need to be married to understand that there are certain things that a person never wants to hear from a spouse, like "Did you read this book before giving it to our child?"

Regardless of how you feel about butts or boogers, anyone who has spent a significant amount of time teaching or raising young kids understands how powerful potty humor can be. The more a topic, story or situation grosses out adults, the more it excites and intrigues children, especially boys. Throughout human history, humor and stories have made awkward, uncomfortable, and important conversations possible and accessible. Unfortunately, the rise in book bans is making these conversations more difficult. In just half of the 2022-23 academic year, 874 unique titles were banned in schools. Kids' enjoyment and intrinsic motivation to read are often ignored once a title or topic has been deemed inappropriate by adults.

The mass protests once required to remove a single children's book from a school or library have been replaced with outspoken individuals and new policies yielding lists of "undesirable" titles generated by artificial intelligence tools like ChatGTP, Google searches, and religious or political groups. Some parents and activists ironically champion free speech while simultaneously embracing the undemocratic removal of titles from public schools and libraries–sometimes without advanced notice or under the cover of night as well as through more public means. Under the guise of "protecting children," adults increasingly interject their culture wars and personal preferences into education policy and book curation while the documented negative impacts of social media content goes unchecked.

In our brave new world of Instagram models and influencers, research has linked social media use to harmful effects on the self-worth and body image of adolescents and young adults. Cultural trends popularized on social media have contributed to an increase in cosmetic surgeries such as Brazilian butt lifts, which have an estimated global mortality rate of one in 20,000 annually with south Florida standing out as America's hotbed. (Eight women died there in 2021 alone from a fat embolism after a BBL.)

Despite these alarming statistics, some people think educators should be fired for reading a story that uses humor to teach children that the butt they have is OK. Much like the students I taught as a New York City kindergarten and first grade teacher, the comedian in me (I have performed stand-up comedy for the past 14 years) finds humor in adults' uneasiness with the universally gross, but also in normal [child] behavior of playing with boogers and laughing at potty humor. Something being normal doesn't make it good, but something not being good doesn't mean it shouldn't be discussed. We all knew a gross kid in school or you may have been that kid. How did you interact with the gross kid, if at all, or how did other students interact with you? Helping children overcome their fears, biases and insecurities cultivates the empathy needed for them to appreciate the differences of others in school and later in life.

Banning books deemed too silly, too gross, too this or too that, robs children of an opportunity to understand themselves and each other in holistic ways that recognize their full humanity, diverse lived experiences and individuality. Ignoring students' interests and reading preferences creates small, warped windows that limit who and what they see and presents children with distorted circus mirrors that only allow them to see the parts of themselves or the world that adults prefer. We don't give kids enough credit for the herculean effort required to be motivated to read content that isn't personally meaningful, relevant or engaging—and many aren't as evidenced by the increasing number of American children who do not read for fun.

When speaking to teachers, librarians and parents about my booger book, I start the conversation with a funny quote from the book: "You call them boogers, but Greg calls them delicious little sugars." After the initial chuckle that usually ensues, I share that if the only thing children learn from Gross Greg is that reading is fun, that's OK with me because it is arguably one of the most important lessons any child can learn.

You can read another article, put down your phone or turn off your monitor, but the youngest and most vulnerable children have no money to buy books, can't travel to a library alone and have little to no access to books outside of school. Book bans, whether they be institutional policies or the everyday minimizing of children's reading choices, remind us that the stories, voices and ideas that inspire young kids to read are not guaranteed and must be protected—even the booger and the butt books.

TENTATIVE

From page 8

In fact, putting money in the pockets of families that have unmet needs will spur more economic activity than the GOP's discredited supply-side strategy of coddling the wealthy.

And more to the point: Raising children is the most important—and expensive—thing most Americans will ever do. That burden is especially acute for lower-income working families. America's tax code should permanently recognize that reality.

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IT'S

From page 8

ence, knowledge and potential staff shortages increase stress on remaining officials and open potentials for bad-faith actors to join the ranks and pose inside risks to election security. Examples in 2020 of officials illegally providing access to electronic voting devices to election vigilantes in their vain attempts to discover digital wrongdoing illustrate one insider threat.

Improve hiring, training and tools

Officials need to be vigilant in recruitment of election staff at all levels and review and update training and internal codes of conduct. Maintaining and enhancing data security and decision-making protocols for rapid response to digital problems and responses to disinformation are likely to be crucial, as are dedicated lines for collaboration with the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. At the same time, states' legal frameworks should provide for expedited procedures to counter county or state election boards that refuse to certify results and set forth effective means to hold refusers accountable.

The battle for real elections and democracy in the United States also continues on other fronts, including defending voting rights, establishing non-discriminatory districts free of extreme political gerrymandering, and countering hate speech and the normalizing of incitement to politically motivated violence. Voices, such as the NAACP Legal Defence Fund, League of Women Voters, and Brennan Center for Justice, are highlighting a wide variety of threats and ways to counter them. Organizations like the Election Reformers Network are advancing policies to address longer-term mechanisms for credible elections. These efforts, along with those of election officials, deserve support.

The actions we each support and those we decide to take are also vital. Democracy places responsibility on every individual to defend it.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

China or bust!

It seems the CNMI is now committed to China over Japan. I can see a lot of students who are now adults who didn't master their lessons in world history class on China and Japan. But only time will tell the story's ending. I will be the first to say, "I pray we will be successful with this China venture."

However, there are still some very serious questions yet to be answered and there are too many variables to predict a definitive outcome. For one, what will be the response of the Chinese government to their citizens coming to the CNMI? Need I remind that the Chinese government clearly stated "they are not going to allow their citizens to come to the CNMI to gamble" and we are about to put e-gambling in all the hotels! Secondly, there is the very uncertain and unstable geopolitical relationship between America and China that can change at the drop of a hat. And third and finally, what is the strategy for getting the full return of the Japanese? That wasn't even mentioned, which leads me to believe that it's now China or bust! Now the very foundation that established our tourism industry is in peril.

There is cause for hope that the Chinese government will not intervene and the younger Japanese generation may be more acceptable to mingling with the Chinese. But with China having a population of over 1 billion and 300 million, there is a great possibility for the CNMI to have an extremely large Chinese tourism market. If this is achieved, history has taught us that the Japanese are not going to come here in numbers and mingle with the Chinese and for those who don't learn the lessons taught to us by history, they are doomed to repeat the same mistakes. We just have to wait and see and pray for the best but prepare for the worst, which is why the Marianas Visitors Authority needs to develop a new strategy for attracting tourists from China and everywhere else, given the fact that MVA is not going to advertise in China.

Given that the MVA and the business sector have committed the CNMI to China but won't advertise in China because they can't afford to open an office in China, I would like to propose that MVA think outside the box to accomplish its advertising goals. China has a population with the potential to literally flood our streets with tourists from China. What MVA needs to do is create a "social media tourism team" composed of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and American. A team of this nature would be far cheaper and even far more effective than opening a single office just for China, as social media platforms combined are now even more powerful and more far-reaching than CNN.

In fact, by advertising through social media, the CNMI can finally start advertising our cannabis industry that has never gotten off the ground to the point of bringing in revenues. It's costing the CNMI over $200,000 more a year to operate the industry than revenues coming in. The Legislature also needs to get busy and fix some things so the cannabis tourism industry can have a real chance to grow and thrive.

There is cause for hope with China but we can't just keep doing only one thing like the EVS-TAP, hoping everything else will just fall into place. We need to make sure everything falls into place to make it work or it will be all for nothing! Get busy and start advertising through social media and pray things will work out with China and Japan somehow for the betterment of our Commonwealth.

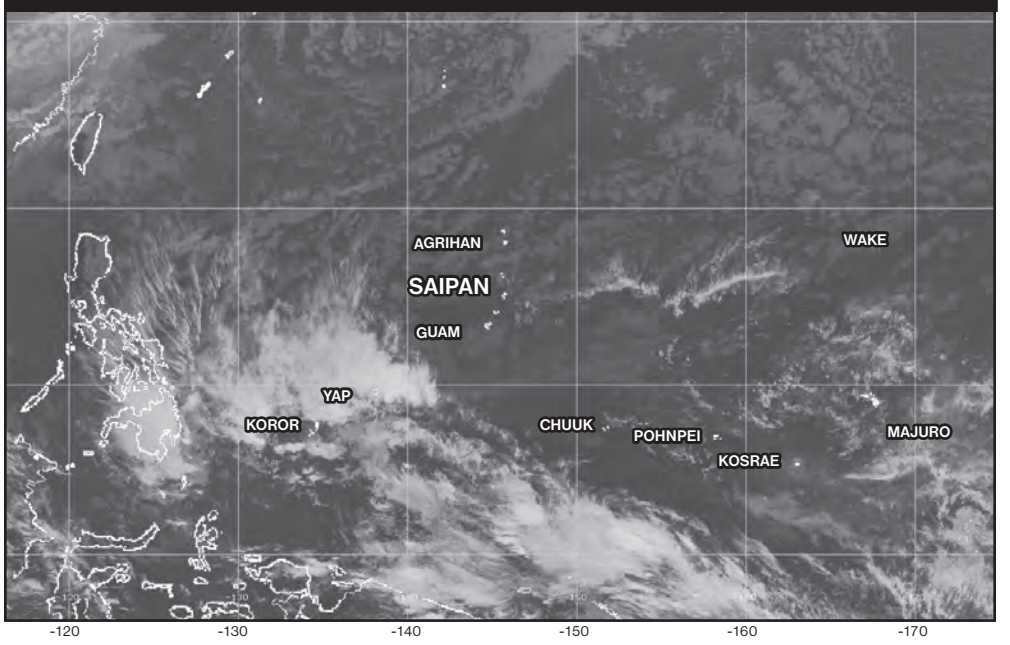
Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman III, Saipan

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Breezy during the day. Mostly sunny days and partly cloudy nights. Isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Breezy during the day. Mostly sunny days and partly cloudy nights. Isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Breezy during the day. Mostly sunny days and partly cloudy nights. Isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
85 / 75°	85 / 75°	85 / 75°	85 / 75°	85 / 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:57 AM MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows mostly cloudy skies and isolated showers moving through the Marianas Waters, associated with a shear line to the south and open cell stratocumulus to the north. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet, composed of north swell, east swell and wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	83° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	83° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:13 PM
Wednesday	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Thursday	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:33 AM	9:48 PM
Wednesday	-	10:05 AM	10:34 PM
Thursday	-	10:38 AM	11:21 PM
Friday	-	11:13 AM	5:18 AM
Saturday	-	12:10 AM	11:51 AM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	76° / 63°
Beijing	Fair	42° / 20°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	59° / 54°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82° / 70°
London	Cloudy	53° / 38°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	64° / 46°
Manila	Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Cloudy	75° / 61°
Miami	Cloudy	70° / 64°
New York	Mist	42° / 37°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	51° / 37°
Paris	Showers	45° / 36°
Busan	Sunny	45° / 28°
Rome	Showers	57° / 46°
Salem	Sunny	53° / 28°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	68° / 56°
Seoul	Sunny	38° / 16°
Tokyo	Sunny	51° / 39°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	47° / 42°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:18 AM	Low Tide	-0.01
10:58 AM	High Tide	1.61
5:05 PM	Low Tide	0.74
10:06 PM	High Tide	1.41

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

MARIANA LIGHTHOUSE:

New lower prices and Valentine's Day specials

By JENISHA DUBRALL
jenisha.dubrall321@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

If you are looking for a place that serves exquisite cuisine in front of a million-dollar view, then Mariana Lighthouse is perfect for you.

Located atop Navy Hill and overlooking the west coast of Saipan, the old lighthouse was renovated, freshened up, and turned into a beautiful restaurant that serves a variety of multicultural dishes, from sushi to local barbecue, lobster and steak, as well as Italian dishes.

For those who haven't visited in a while, a few changes have been made to the restaurant to better accommodate their customer's needs, including revised menus and longer restaurant hours.

Starting this February, the lighthouse will now be open for late lunch from 3pm to 5pm and will be serving dinner from 5pm to 9pm, as well as Happy Hour from 5pm to 7pm. Their revised menu still includes all of their delicious original dishes but now with lower prices.

JENISHA DUBRALL

Mariana Lighthouse's Valentine's Day Promo Surf and Turf Ribeye Steak, Surf and Turf New York Steak Strip, and Fried Salmon Special with Cajun shrimp.

JENISHA DUBRALL

The Mariana Lighthouse restaurant atop Navy Hill.

JENISHA DUBRALL

From left, Mariana Lighthouse chefs Alfredo Capcio, Jonathan Ong, Allen Del Coro, and general manager Becky Cruz pose in front of their Valentine's Day promo dishes.

JENISHA DUBRALL

From left, Mariana Lighthouse servers Rolex Toca, Carlene Moses, general manager Becky Cruz, cook Josh Cabrera, and server Jenny Capati.

Mariana Lighthouse is open on Mondays and Tuesdays, as well as Thursday to Sunday.

Every Tuesday and Saturday they will be hosting a night market with different vendors from all over Saipan from 5pm to 9pm. The Tuesday night markets will be focused on the vendors but the lighthouse will be selling their own food on the Saturday markets. The Saturday markets will start on Feb. 10. Your vendor can take part in their night market as well. All interested vendors are encouraged to call the number on their website to express their interest (670-322-3353).

Valentine's Day special

Spend Valentine' s Day watching the sunset with your loved ones at Mariana Lighthouse and enjoy their special deals. Their Valentine' s promo includes Surf and Turf Ribeye Steak at $59.50 (fit for two people) and their Surf and Turf New York Strip at $35.

Considering that Lent starts on Valentine' s Day, the chefs are ready to accommodate your commitment to your faith, therefore seafood will be served, including a Salmon with Shrimp Special for just $30.

All three specials come with a glass of house wine.

There will potentially be giveaways for you and your loved one.

The lighthouse encourages customers to make reservations a few days in advance since they are usually fully booked on Valentine's Day.

Mariana Lighthouse can also accommodate private parties. The staff and management are eager to serve you. Consider your next outing here at Mariana Lighthouse whether it be a romantic date, a private party, or to enjoy their lively night market.

For more information, you can visit their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/marianalighthouse.official/.

For more updates, you can follow them on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/marianalighthouse.official/?hl=en.

Avian flu devastating farms in California's 'Egg Basket'

PETALUMA, Calif. (AP)—Last month, Mike Weber got the news every poultry farmer fears: His chickens tested positive for avian flu.

Following government rules, Weber's company, Sunrise Farms, had to slaughter its entire flock of egg-laying hens—550,000 birds—to prevent the disease from infecting other farms in Sonoma County north of San Francisco.

"It's a trauma. We're all going through grief as a result of it," said Weber, standing in an empty hen house. "Petaluma is known as the Egg Basket of the World. It's devastating to see that egg basket go up in flames."

A year after the bird flu led to record egg prices and widespread shortages, the disease known as highly pathogenic avian influenza is wreaking havoc in California, which escaped the earlier wave of outbreaks that devastated poultry farms in the Midwest.

The highly contagious virus has ravaged Sonoma County, where officials have declared a state of emergency. During the past two months, nearly a dozen commercial farms have had to destroy more than 1 million birds to control the outbreak, dealing an economic blow to farmers, workers and their customers.

Merced County in Central California also has been hit hard, with outbreaks at several large commercial egg-producing farms in recent weeks.

Experts say bird flu is spread by ducks, geese and other migratory birds. The waterfowl can carry the virus without getting sick and easily spread it through their droppings to chicken and turkey farms and backyard flocks through droppings and nasal discharges.

Most Americans feel they pay too much in taxes, poll finds

NEW YORK (AP)—A majority of taxpayers feel they pay too much in taxes, with many saying that they receive a poor value in return, according to a new poll from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Two-thirds of U.S. taxpayers say they spend "too much" on federal income taxes, as tax season begins. About 7 in 10 say the same about local property taxes, while roughly 6 in 10 feel that way about state sales tax. Generally speaking, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to view taxes as unfair, to say they are paying too much in taxes, and to see taxes as a poor value.

The poll found that few U.S. adults have a high level of confidence that the institutions that ultimately use their tax dollars—whether the federal government or local school districts—spend those taxes in the best interest of "people like them." But people tend to trust governing bodies closer to home with their tax dollars slightly more: 16% are extremely or very confident in their local school district, compared to 6% for the federal government.

Adults who are 60 and older are more likely than younger adults to perceive taxes, generally, as fair.

Chris Berry, a professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy who was involved in the creation of the poll, said that, overall, public opinion about taxes and trust in government has declined. He sees the poll results as partly reflecting increased political polarization but says the public has long typically trusted local government more than the federal government.

"One of the things you'll hear said is, 'There's no Democratic or Republican way to collect the trash or pave the streets,'" he said. "We tend to think of local government as less partisan."

Among those who pay federal income taxes, half say they would prefer having fewer government services if it meant reducing their bill. One-third would keep their taxes the same in exchange for the same services, and 16% would opt to increase taxes for more services.

Danny Velasquez, 39, a business manager and Democrat in Boston who answered the poll, said he trusts local government to spend his tax dollars better than the federal government.

Nation

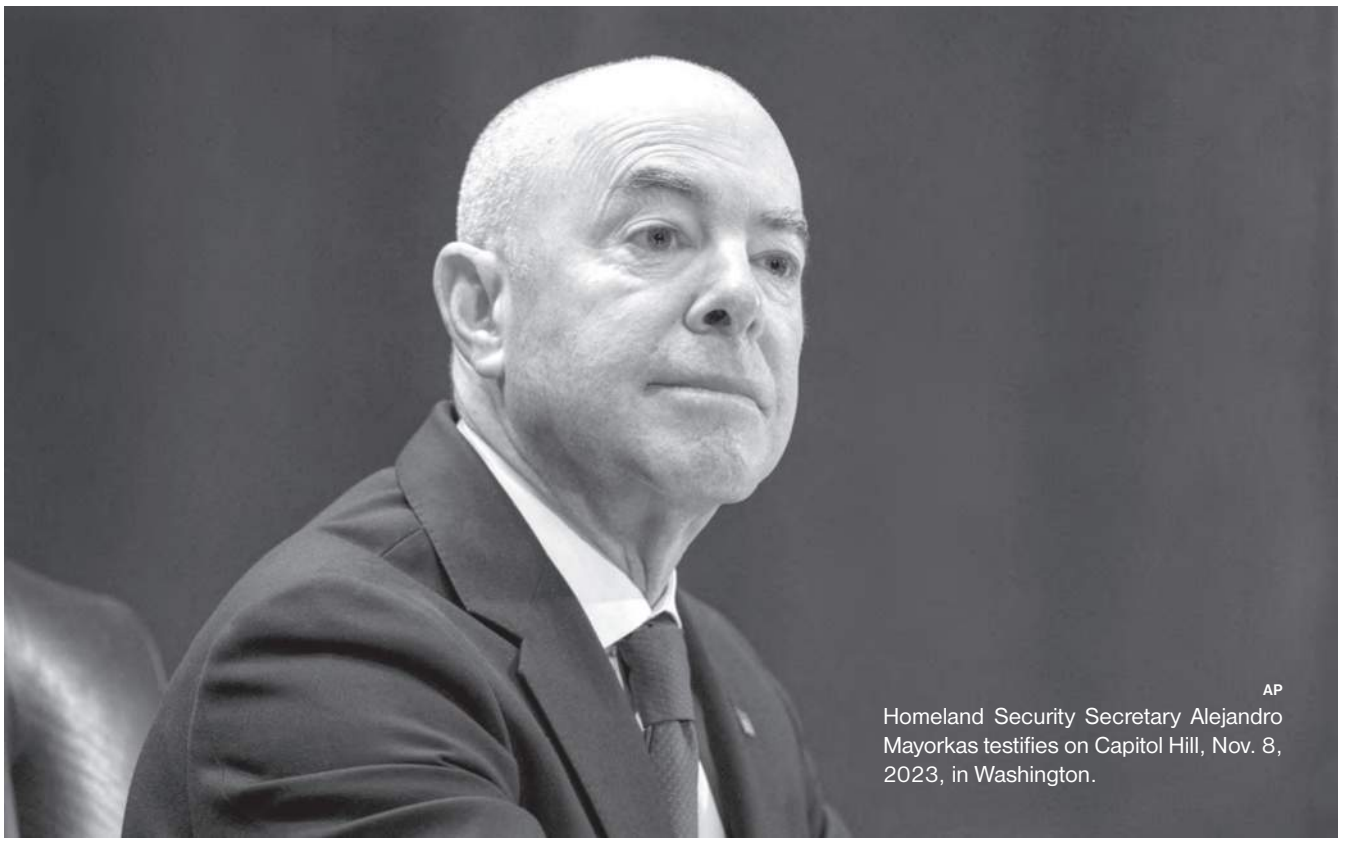
House GOP releases impeachment articles in bid to oust Mayorkas

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Republicans on Sunday released two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas as they vowed to swiftly push forward with election-year efforts to oust him over what they call his failure to manage the U.S.-Mexico border. The rare step against a Cabinet member drew outrage from Democrats and the agency as a politically motivated stunt lacking the constitutional basis to remove Mayorkas from office.

Republicans contend Mayorkas is guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that amount to a "willful and systemic refusal to comply with the law" on immigration and a "breach of the public trust." Impeachment, they say, is "Congress's only viable option."

"Alejandro N. Mayorkas willfully and systemically refused to comply with the immigration laws, failed to control the border to the detriment of national security, compromised public safety, and violated the rule of law and separation of powers in the Constitution, to the manifest injury of the people of the United States," the impeachment resolution says.

Only once in American history has a Cabinet secretary been impeached: William Belknap, President Ulysses Grant's war secretary, in 1876, over kickbacks in government contracts. Going after an official for a policy dispute, in this instance over the claim that Mayorkas is not upholding immigration laws, is unprecedented.



AP

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies on Capitol Hill, Nov. 8, 2023, in Washington.

Ever since taking control of the House in 2023, Republicans have pushed to impeach Mayorkas. Sunday's announcement comes as their other impeachment drive—to impeach Democratic President Joe Biden in relation to his son Hunter's business dealings—has struggled to advance.

But Republicans have moved with rapid speed against Mayorkas after a series of hearings in recent weeks. It all comes at a time when border security and immigration are key issues in the 2024 campaign and as Donald Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, is promising to launch the "largest deportation operation" in U.S. history if he returns to the White House.

The Republican-controlled House Homeland Security Committee is set to vote Tuesday on the articles of impeachment, aiming to send them to the full House for consideration. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said the House will move forward as soon as possible with a vote after that.

Passage requires only a House majority. The Senate would hold a trial, and a two-thirds vote is required for conviction, an exceedingly unlikely outcome in the Democratic-run Senate.

The GOP push also comes at a curious time for Mayorkas.

Even as the House is taking steps to try remove him from office, Mayorkas has been engaged in arduous negotiations with senators seeking to reach a bipartisan deal on border policy. He has won praise from senators for his engagement in the process.

Democrats have lambasted the impeachment proceedings, calling them a waste of time when lawmakers should be working together to solve the problems. They also say Republicans are part of the problems at the border, with Republicans attacking Mayorkas even as they have failed to give his department the tools it needs to manage the situation.

"They don't want to fix the problem; they want to campaign on it. That's why they have undermined efforts to achieve bipartisan solutions and ignored the facts, legal scholars and experts, and even the Constitution itself in their quest to baselessly impeach Secretary Mayorkas," the department said in a statement Sunday.

Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the top Democrat on the House committee, said the GOP resolution did not have "a shred of evidence of high crimes or misdemeanors—the Constitutional standard for impeachment."

The two articles mark the culmination of a roughly yearlong examination by Republicans of the secretary's handling of the border and what they describe as a crisis of the administration's own making. Republicans contend that the administration and Mayorkas specifically either got rid of policies in place under Trump that had controlled migration or enacted policies of their own that encouraged migrants from around the world to come to the U.S. illegally via the southern border. They also accused Mayorkas of lying to Congress, pointing to comments about the border being secure or about vetting of Afghans airlifted to the U.S.

ACROSS THE NATION

Man in his 80s kills wife, 2 adult children in murder-suicide at Los Angeles home, police say

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A man in his 80s shot and killed his wife and two adult children before killing himself Saturday at a Los Angeles home, authorities said. A witness at the residence reported a shooting around 7 p.m. in the Granada Hills area, according to the Los Angeles Police Department. Responding officers forced their way in and the witness directed them to four people dead at the scene in what police characterized as a murder-suicide. The survivor was barricaded in a room during the shooting and called police, but details on who that person is were not immediately released, ABC 7 reported. "The only positive point is that you at least have one witness that has survived this incident," police Capt. Kelly Muniz said during a press briefing. Investigators believe the shooter, who was described only as a man in his 80s, fatally shot his wife, who was also in her 80s, and their two adult children, a man and a woman in their 40s. He was found with a self-inflicted gunshot wound in a different part of the house, police said. The names of the gunman and the victims and details on a possible motive were not immediately released.

Dying thief who stole 'Wizard of Oz' ruby slippers from Minnesota museum will likely avoid prison

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—A dying thief who confessed to stealing a pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in "The Wizard of Oz" because he wanted to pull off "one last score" is expected to stay out of prison after he's sentenced Monday. Terry Jon Martin, 76, stole the slippers in 2005 from the Judy Garland Museum in the late actor's hometown of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. He gave into temptation after an old mob associate told him the shoes had to be adorned with real jewels to justify their $1 million insured value, his attorney revealed in a memo to the federal court ahead of his sentencing in Duluth. The FBI recovered the shoes in 2018 when someone else tried to claim a reward. Martin wasn't charged with stealing them until last year. He pleaded guilty in October to theft of a major artwork, admitting to using a hammer to smash the glass of the museum door and display case to take the slippers. But his motivation remained mostly a mystery until defense attorney Dane DeKrey revealed it this month.

A driver backs into a nail salon, killing a woman and injuring 3 other people

PACIFIC, Mo. (AP)—A driver backed through the wall of a Missouri nail salon, killing a woman and injuring three other people, authorities said. The crash happened Saturday afternoon in Pacific, a town about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest of St. Louis, the Missouri State Highway Patrol said. Killed was Jill Goddard, 61, of Pacific, who was in the salon, the patrol said. Emergency crews also took the 57-year-old driver and two people inside the salon to hospitals with minor injuries. The youngest of the injured salon patrons was 17. The patrol released no other details about what happened. It isn't clear whether the driver might be charged with a crime.

Republican legislatures in some states trying to keep abortion off the ballot

CHICAGO (AP)—Legislative efforts in Missouri and Mississippi are attempting to prevent voters from having a say over abortion rights, building on anti-abortion strategies seen in other states, including last year in Ohio.

Democrats and abortion rights advocates say the efforts are evidence that Republican lawmakers and abortion opponents are trying to undercut democratic processes meant to give voters a direct role in forming state laws.

"They're scared of the people and their voices, so their response is to prevent their voices from being heard," said Laurie Bertram Roberts, executive director of Mississippi Reproductive Freedom Fund. "There's nothing democratic about that, and it's the same blueprint we've seen in Ohio and all these other states, again and again."

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022, voters in seven states have either protected abortion rights or defeated attempts to curtail them in statewide votes. Democrats have pledged to make the issue a central campaign topic this year for races up and down the ballot.

A proposal passed Wednesday by the Mississippi House would ban residents from placing abortion initiatives on the statewide ballot. Mississippi has among the toughest abortion restrictions in the country, with the procedure banned except to save the life of the woman or in cases of rape or incest.

In response to the bill, Democratic Rep. Cheikh Taylor said direct democracy "shouldn't include terms and conditions."

"Don't let anyone tell you this is just about abortion," Taylor said. "This is about a Republican Party who thinks they know what's best for you better than you know what's best for you. This is about control. So much for liberty and limited government."

The resolution is an attempt to revive a ballot initiative process in Mississippi, which has been without one since 2021 when the state Supreme Court ruled that the process was invalid because it required people to gather signatures from the state's five previous U.S. House districts. Mississippi dropped to four districts after the 2000 census, but the initiative language was never updated.

Republican Rep. Fred Shanks said House Republicans would not have approved the resolution, which will soon head to the Senate, without the abortion exemption. Some House Republicans said voters should not be allowed to vote on changing abortion laws because Mississippi originated the legal case that overturned Roe v. Wade.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Ex-Philippines leader Duterte assails Marcos, accusing him of plotting to expand grip on power

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is throwing allegations at his successor, Fernando Marcos Jr., and even raising the prospect of removing him from office, bringing into the open a long-rumored split between the two. In an expletive-laden speech late Sunday, the former populist leader alleged Marcos' legislative allies are plotting to amend the constitution to lift term limits and warned that could lead to him being ousted like his father—the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Duterte also accused Marcos of being a drug addict. Members of the House of Representatives have been talking about amending the constitution, and Duterte claimed without offering any evidence that lawmakers who support Marcos, including House Speaker Martin Romualdez, are bribing local officials to amend the 1987 constitution to remove term limits so they can extend their grip on power. Romualdez, who is the current president's cousin, has denied that claim, saying he wants the constitution amended only to remove restrictions on foreign investment. Marcos has said he is open to altering economic provisions of the constitution but opposes changing a provision that restricts foreign ownership of land. He has not commented on Duterte's claim about lifting term limits, under which the president can serve only a single six-year term. Opponents of opening the constitution to changes include the Senate. It issued a statement last week warning its checks-and-balance role could be undermined if the House of Representatives proceeded with plans to pursue amendments in joint session rather than by separate voting in the 24-member Senate and the 316-strong House. The 1987 constitution, which is laden with safeguards to prevent dictatorships, came into force a year after Marcos' strongman father was ousted by an army-backed "people power" uprising amid allegations of plunder and human rights atrocities during his rule.

N. Korea says leader Kim supervised tests of cruise missiles designed to be fired from submarines

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised test-firings of new cruise missiles designed to be launched from submarines and also reviewed efforts to build a nuclear-powered submarine while reiterating his goal of building a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he portrays as growing external threats, state media said Monday. The report came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea firing multiple cruise missiles over waters near the eastern port of Sinpo, where the North has a major shipyard developing submarines. It was the latest in a streak of weapons demonstrations by North Korea amid increasing tensions with the United States, South Korea and Japan. North Korea's official newspaper Rodong Sinmun published photos of what appeared to be at least two missiles fired separately. Both created grayish-white clouds as they broke the water surface and soared into the air at an angle of around 45 degrees, which possibly suggests they were fired from torpedo launch tubes. State media said the missiles were Pulhwasal-3-31, a new type of weapon first tested last week in land-based launches from North Korea's western coast.

China orders a Japanese fishing boat to leave waters near Japan-held islands claimed by Beijing

BEIJING (AP)—China's coast guard said Saturday its officers ordered a Japanese fishing vessel and several patrol ships to leave waters surrounding tiny Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea. It marked the latest incident pointing to lingering tensions between the sides. China says the islands belong to it and refuses to recognize Japan's claim to the uninhabited chain known as the Senkakus in Japanese and Diaoyu in Chinese. Taiwan also claims the islands, which it calls Diaoyutai, but has signed access agreements for its fishermen with Japan and does not actively take part in the dispute. Coast guard spokesperson Gan Yu said in a statement that the vessels "illegally entered" the waters, prompting its response. "We urge Japan to stop all illegal activities in the waters immediately and to ensure similar incidents would not happen again," the statement said. But the statement did not specify whether the vessels complied with the order. China's insistence on sovereignty over the islands is part of its expansive territorial claims in the Pacific, including to underwater resources in the East China Sea, the self-governing island republic of Taiwan with its population of 23 million, and virtually the entire South China Sea, through which an estimated $5 trillion in international trade passes each year. As with the Senkakus, China largely bases its claims on vague historical precedents. Taiwan, a former Japanese colony, split from mainland China in 1949 amid the Chinese Civil War. The islands lie between Taiwan and Okinawa, 330 kilometers (205 miles) off the Chinese coast. Following World War II, they were administered by the United States and returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1972.

Beijing steps up military pressure on Taiwan after the US and China announce talks

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—China sent more than 30 warplanes and a group of navy ships toward Taiwan, the island's defense ministry said Saturday. The military pressure comes on the heels of an announcement that senior American and Chinese representatives were expected to meet in the Thai capital as the two countries seek to cool tensions. The Chinese People's Liberation Army sent 33 aircraft, including SU-30 fighters, and six navy vessels around Taiwan, between 6 a.m. Friday to 6 a.m. Saturday. Of these, 13 warplanes crossed the midline of the Taiwan Strait—an unofficial boundary that's considered a buffer between the island and mainland. Taiwan has monitored the situation and employed its own forces in response to the activities. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and in recent years has shown is displeasure at political activities in Taiwan by sending military planes and ships. Taiwan said six Chinese balloons either flew over the island or through airspace just north of it days after the self-governing island elected Lai Ching-te as the new president. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party largely campaigned on self-determination, social justice and a rejection of China's threats. United States National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi were both in Bangkok for talks, though it wasn't clear when the meeting would take place or if it already had.

World

US sees signs of progress in a deal to free hostages

AP

People attend a demonstration demanding the release of the hostages taken by Hamas militants into the Gaza Strip during the Oct. 7th attack, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024.

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. negotiators are making progress on a potential agreement under which Israel would pause military operations against Hamas in Gaza for two months in exchange for the release of more than 100 hostages who were captured in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, according to two senior administration officials.

» Bring temporary pause to Israel-Hamas war

The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations, said Saturday that emerging terms of the yet-to-be sealed deal would play out over two phases.

In the first phase, fighting would stop to allow for the remaining women, elderly and wounded hostages to be released by Hamas.

Israel and Hamas would then aim to work out details during the first 30 days of the pause for a second phase in which Israeli soldiers and civilian men would be released. The emerging deal also calls for Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza.

While the proposed deal would not end the war, U.S. officials are hopeful that such an agreement could lay the groundwork for a durable resolution to the conflict.

The New York Times first reported on Saturday that progress has been made towards an agreement for a pause in fighting in exchange for the remaining hostages.

CIA director Bill Burns is expected to discuss the contours of the emerging agreement when he meets on Sunday in France with David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel for talks centered on the hostage negotiations, according to three people familiar with the scheduled meeting who were not authorized to comment publicly.

President Joe Biden on Friday spoke by phone with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. Calls with both leaders focused on the hostage situation.

"Both leaders affirmed that a hostage deal is central to establishing a prolonged humanitarian pause in the fighting and ensure additional life-saving humanitarian assistance reaches civilians in need throughout Gaza," the White House said in a statement about Biden's call with the Qatari leader. "They underscored the urgency of the situation, and welcomed the close cooperation among their teams to advance recent discussions."

Burns heads to France for the high-level talks after White House senior adviser Brett McGurk traveled to the Mideast this week for talks on the hostage situation.

Ukraine says it has no evidence for Russia's claim dozens of POWs died in shot down plane

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Officials in Ukraine said Russia has provided no credible evidence to back its claims that Ukrainian forces shot down a military transport plane that Moscow says was carrying Ukrainian prisoners of war who were to be swapped for Russian POWs.

The Ukrainian agency that deals with prisoner exchanges said late Friday that Russian officials had "with great delay" provided it with a list of the 65 Ukrainians who Moscow said had died in the plane crash in Russia's Belgorod region on Wednesday.

Ukraine's Coordination Staff for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said relatives of the named POWs were unable to identify their loved ones in crash site photos provided by Russian authorities. The agency's update cited Ukraine's military intelligence chief, Lt. Col. Kyrylo Budanov, as saying that Kyiv had no verifiable information about who was on the plane.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Wednesday that missiles fired from across the border brought down the transport plane that it said was taking the POWs back to Ukraine. Local authorities in Belgorod, which borders Ukraine, said the crash killed all 74 people onboard, including six crew members and three Russian servicemen.

"We currently don't have evidence that there could have been that many people onboard the aircraft. Russian propaganda's claim that the IL-76 aircraft was transporting 65 Ukrainian POWs (heading) for a prisoner swap continues to raise a lot of questions," Budanov said.

Overdrive

Furniture shopping in the giant Lexus TX500h

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News

LEXUS/TNS

The 2024 Lexus TX 500h.

Three-row SUVs are pickups with hatchbacks, so Mrs. Payne and I took my 2024 Lexus TX 500h Direct 4 to Gardner White to complete our month-long search for a big, stuffed sofa chair.

Ahead of our chair pickup, we called the GW furniture department to make certain the mega-chair would fit.

Salesman: What's a Lexus TX?

Me: It's like a Chevy Traverse.

Salesman: Oh yeah, you should be fine.

We measured, he was right. The chair was 25" tall x 38" deep, which fit (sideways) through the rear hatch. The chair's biggest dimension was width at 52" but the interior easily swallowed that with the rear two rows of seats flattened. Heck, with 85" of room from the back of the front seat to the hatch, we could have fit our living room sofa in there. TX for Texas-sized.

For all their utility, three-row mid-sized SUVs are a varied lot depending on brand. A BMW X7 has more technology than the space shuttle (and probably horsepower, too). The Dodge Durango Hellcat is also a rocket ship on wheels—and, like a Charger Hellcat, offers cinema-size rear seats so the whole family can enjoy the theatrics. The Mazda CX-90? Honey, I blew up the Miata.

Now along comes Lexus with its first mature three-row unibody ute, and it's got all of the Toyota family DNA: Hybrid power, Lexus RX interior, Papa Prius quirkiness.

Being a descendent of Prius used to mean geeky design and interior features in weird places (think shifters on the dash). But for '24, Prius has cleaned up its act with a handsome, minimalist design. So, too, Lexus TX. Circling the TX in the Gardner White parking lot, I was struck by how much my tester looked like ... well, a Chevy Traverse parked nearby.

Clean lines, boxy shape, slab sides, square jaw. Made in Indiana, which may explain the Midwest accent. "That's really nice looking," said my wife's gal pal Jameson.

Where was the Darth Vader maw ("Spindle Grille" in Lexus speak) that I had just tested on the Lexus UX 250h? Where were the deeply scalloped side flanks? Zany rear hatchback design? The TX is spare, purposeful—dare I say conservative? The front fascia could pass for the simple Shake Shack logo.

I pressed the key fob's unlock button just to make sure I had the right vehicle. Like GM's three-row products—Traverse, Buick Enclave and GMC Acadia—the Lexus is built for travel. German SUVs are built for vroom, TX for room.

It's not just the chair-swallowing rear cargo hold. With all three rows of seats upright, the Lexus will carry a men's basketball lineup and its sixth man. At 6'5", I could sit behind myself in the third row. Lexus engineers were thoughtful enough to add space under the second row for my size-15 shoes as well. Access to the third row is easy: push the button on top of the seatback or yank the handle on the seat bottom, and the captain's chair will collapse forward.

Careful exiting, though. After collapsing the seat forward, I tried to exit the third row facing forward. Bad idea. My foot slipped on the slick door rail and—YAAAHHH!— I sprawled forward, my right knee buckling under the middle seat. Note to self: Exit backward, like climbing down from a ladder.

The roomy theme pervaded the cabin, including a console that can charge phones and square cupholders that accommodate a variety of bottles. Even the name is big: TX500h F SPORT Performance Direct 4. Allow me to translate:

TX tops an (out of order) alphanumeric SUV lineup that includes the subcompact UX, compact NX, midsize RX, rugged GX and full-size LX. The number 500 is the top trim model and h = Hybrid. F SPORT designates a performance trim with standard Direct 4 all-wheel drive with four-wheel steer.

It all gels for a surprisingly peppy driving experience anchored by a hybrid 4-cylinder drivetrain that debuted in the geeky Pious—er, Prius—25 years ago.

That's right. Behind that Shake Shack grille is a Prius-like gas-hybrid powertrain made up of a nickel-hydride metal battery, electric motors and a 2.4-liter turbocharged 4-banger. No Bimmer-like V-6 or Durango-like V-8. Just a good ol' Toyota hybrid that somehow pumps out 366 horsepower and 406 pound-feet of torque. The same turbo-4 is available in the standard TX 350, or you can move up to hybrid V-6 in the 550h plug-in to creep silently around town for 33 miles on electrons.

My F SPORT dressed in Incognito (clay gray) is the sweet spot. Without a giant sofa chair in the cargo bay, I nailed the throttle onto I-75 and the 4,949-pound land yacht merged with authority.

From geek to chic, Prius's hybrid powertrain is so mainstream it powers a three-row family luxury SUV. Lexus also indulges its inner geek in operation. The space-saving monostable shifter is right out of the Prius and helps save console room. Happily, Lexus has abandoned its unworkable console touchpad for a proper, 14-inch touchscreen. With fat temperature dials, TX's system echoes the best-selling RX.

The TX's haptic adaptive cruise control steering wheel controls are more problematic. GM products do this best with raised switches, roller and buttons that allow you to adjust speed and volume without taking your eyes off the road.

The Lexus attempts that same feat with a steering touchpad that controls info in the head-up display. On I-75, my eyes never left the road, but the touchpad was cumbersome to operate. That head-up display comes with a pricey $2,380 Technology package that includes two essentials in a three-row this size: auto park and panoramic camera.

The latter came in handy as I backed into the Gardner White loading dock to load our chair (and again when I unloaded the chair in our garage). Between the cameras, collapsing side mirrors and the constant beeping of sensors, I was able to back right up to the GW dock where the chair awaited.

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Vehicle type**: Front-engine, front- and all-wheel-drive six- or seven-passenger SUV
- **Price**: $55,050, including $1,350 destination fee ($77,159 TX500h F Sport as tested)
- **Powerplant:** 2.4-liter turbocharged inline 4-cylinder (TX350); Hybrid 2.4-liter turbocharged inline 4-cylinder with 1.4 kWh nickel metal hydride battery and two electric motors (TX500h)
- **Power**: 275 horsepower, 317 pound-feet of torque (turbo-4); 366 horsepower, 406 pound-feet of torque (hybrid)
- **Transmissions**: 8-speed automatic (TX350); 6-speed automatic/direct drive (TX550h)
- **Performance**: 0-60 mph (5.7 seconds, Car and Driver); towing capacity, 5,000 pounds
- **Weight**: 4,949 pounds
- **Fuel economy**: EPA, 27 mpg city/28 highway/27 combined
- **REPORT CARD**
- **Highs**: Simple styling; roomy interior
- **Lows**: Bland interior by luxe standards; finicky head-up display
- **Overall**: ✪✪✪

An easy DIY job

Q: My 2014 Highlander has grease leaking from the rear lift gate power strut. Should it be replaced, and if so, how big a job is it? I try to do most work like this myself.

J.N., Las Vegas

A: This is one of the easiest DIY jobs if the struts are not motorized. You may replace motorized struts with ordinary units—and save some money--if you wish. Unless you want to hold the hatch open or get hit in the head, both struts should be replaced. Just be sure to use a support such as a broomstick to hold the hatch open and change the struts one at a time.

■■■

Q: A mouse or chipmunk ate through the windshield wiper supply hose below the reservoir container in my 2021 Honda Pilot. I firmly believe rodent damage is caused by one other thing besides cornstarch-based wiring insulation. I have seen no mention anywhere of the plastic or sometimes aluminum under engine shields. These I guess are to reduce wind drag but the handy shelves make an excellent platform or step-up location for rodents once they climb up into them. The rodent can then chew at its heart's content. Can I remove it?

J.H., Glencoe, Illinois

A: Yes, you can remove it, but I suggest leaving it in place. If they didn't serve a purpose, carmakers would not incur the added cost of installing them. They protect the lower engine area from road debris.

■■■

Q: Recently you offered recommendations for keeping rodents, etc. from the garage of S.T. in Ocala, Florida. Here's what I recommend: I put an open box of Irish Spring soap in my cars, around the garage and garage doors. For some reason the rodents don't like the smell.

J.K., Northampton, Pennsylvania

A: Why, those dirty rats!

■■■

Q: I am considering buying a car that instead of a spare tire has a tire sealant and inflator kit. All my previous cars have had either a full-size or space-saver spare. Will a tire sealant and inflator kit work for a common flat (nail in the tire)? If so for how long? Should I consider buying a spare and jack for peace of mind?

R.K., Lake Forest, Illinois

A: Yes, it will plug small leaks. The fix may last for a while, but you should get the tire professionally repaired or replaced. If the tire has a gash, however, there's no sealant in the universe that will work. (Well, maybe unobtanium could do the trick.) You will have to call your roadside assistance company. No need to buy a spare. Where would you put it? No need to buy a jack if you don't have a spare.

■■■

Q: Why are new cars coming with tires filled with nitrogen? Is there any real difference than air? Also, one needs to refill them with nitrogen, but how available are nitrogen filling pumps or stations?

S.S., Chicago

A: I have long contended that nitrogen for tires is a scam. The air we breathe is nearly 80% nitrogen. For as long as there have been pneumatic tires, they have been filled with plain air. Some tire dealers offer free nitrogen fills and refills for their customers, but I for one, would never pay extra for the stuff. You don't see nitrogen machines at the 7-Eleven, do you?

MOTORMOUTH

BY BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Life & Style

Climate activists throw soup at the 'Mona Lisa' in Paris

PARIS (AP)—Two climate activists hurled soup Sunday at the glass protecting the "Mona Lisa" at the Louvre Museum in Paris and shouted slogans advocating for a sustainable food system.

In a video posted on social media, two women with the words "FOOD RIPOSTE" written on their T-shirts could be seen passing under a security barrier to get closer to the painting and throwing soup at the glass protecting Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece.

"What's the most important thing?" they shouted. "Art, or right to a healthy and sustainable food?"

"Our farming system is sick. Our farmers are dying at work," they added.

The Louvre employees could then be seen putting black panels in front of the Mona Lisa and asking visitors to evacuate the room.

Paris police said that two people were arrested following the incident.

AP

In this grab taken from video, activists react after throwing soup at the glass protecting the Mona Lisa, at the Louvre Museum, Paris, Sunday. Jan. 28, 2024, shouting slogans advocating for a sustainable food system.

On its website, the Food Riposte group said the French government is breaking its climate commitments and called for the equivalent of the country's state-sponsored health care system to be put in place to give people better access to healthy food while providing farmers a decent income.

Angry French farmers have been using their tractors for days to set up road blockades and slow traffic across France to seek better remuneration for their produce, less red tape and protection against cheap imports. They also dumped stinky agricultural waste at the gates of government offices.

A quiet weekend at the box office, with 'The Beekeeper' on top and some Oscar boosts

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Movie theaters and audiences settled for seconds this weekend. With no new wide releases on the schedule, a mob of holdovers sustained the North American box office, which was led by " The Beekeeper " in its third week of release.

Amazon MGM Studios' Jason Statham actioner earned $7.4 million to take the No. 1 spot, according to studio estimates Sunday. It was down only 14% from the previous weekend and brings its running domestic total to $42.3 million. Globally, it has crossed $100 million.

Paramount's " Mean Girls " musical, which is also in its third weekend, was close behind, with $7.3 million. The movie has now earned $60.8 million in North America.

In third place, Warner Bros.' " Wonka " added $5.9 million in its seventh weekend as the Timothée Chalamet-led musical inches closer to $200 million domestic. It's currently at $195.2 million in North America and $552 million globally.

Rounding out the top five were Universal and Illumination's "Migration," with $5.1 million, which pushed it over the $100 million mark domestically, and Sony's romantic comedy "Anyone But You," with $4.8 million, bringing its total to $71.2 million.

"Overall, it's a very slow weekend in terms of sheer box office but a fantastic weekend to be a moviegoer," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "The strikes created a lot of headwind, but the disruption to the release calendar is creating opportunities and potential. It's an ever-changing ecosystem."

Those that benefited included the Hindi-language action film "Fighter," which debuted in sixth place with $3.7 million, "Godzilla Minus One," which was re-released in black and white for a week and cracked the top 10, and several awards contenders.

- "The Beekeeper," $7.4 million.
- "Mean Girls," $7.3 million.
- "Wonka," $5.9 million.
- "Migration," $5.1 million.
- "Anyone But You," $4.8 million.
- "Fighter," $3.7 million.
- "Poor Things," $3 million.
- "American Fiction," $2.9 million.
- "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," $2.8 million.
- "Godzilla Minus One," $2.6 million.

Taylor Swift greets Super Bowl-bound Travis Kelce with a kiss after the Chiefs win the AFC title game

BALTIMORE (AP)—Taylor Swift gave Travis Kelce a short peck and embraced him with a big hug after he and the Kansas City Chiefs beat the Baltimore Ravens to advance to the Super Bowl, and then the two locked lips with a smooch seen around the football world.

Sealed with a kiss, Swift now might be Las Vegas bound to cheer on her boyfriend as he and the Chiefs seek back-to-back titles. ... "Ready For It"?

Swift, almost certainly the biggest star on the planet whose romance with Kelce became one of the prominent stories this NFL season, was front and center throughout the Chiefs' 17-10 victory in the AFC championship game and their celebration afterward.

Before accepting the Lamar Hunt Trophy for the fourth time in five years, coach Andy Reid, standing on stage, found Swift in the crowd and pointed at her. Swift pointed back.

She and Kelce walked arm and arm around the field afterward, long after many of his teammates had gone to the locker room. Kelce asked where his brother Jason was, and Swift stepped away for them to have a moment.

Jason Kelce, also a Super Bowl champion and an All-Pro center with the Philadelphia Eagles who lost to the Chiefs in last year's Super Bowl, hugged Travis and told him to finish the job again. Travis asked Jason, who stole the show last week in Buffalo by celebrating the Chiefs' win shirtless in the cold, if he was going to keep his shirt on this time.

Travis Kelce never made it to speak to reporters afterward. Swift was clearly a bigger priority for him.

"You can tell he loves this game," rookie receiver Rashee Rice said. "Honestly, I could tell that he loved this victory more than any victory this season."

The only thing that endangers Swift being at Allegiant Stadium when the Chiefs face the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl on Feb. 11 is her "Eras Tour" schedule. She has concerts set for Tokyo on Friday, Feb. 9 and Saturday, Feb. 10, but the time difference would allow her to be on hand for the game.

Son's choices as grown-up draw fire from his father

DEAR ABBY: I am the father of an adult son, "Kirk," who is in a relationship with a younger woman who has a young child. Neither is well educated, but they both have decent jobs.

Kirk has a teenage daughter who is getting ready for college in another state. They are close, although I'm not sure to what degree he supports her financially. I have saved some money for her college, but he has not. Kirk never married her mom.

My concern had been that my son and his girlfriend might be trying to have a baby. When he told me she is pregnant, I was beyond livid and let him know what a mistake this was. I told Kirk he owns nothing nor does she, and asked what that baby has to look forward to. His girlfriend receives no support from her child's father.

My son has now stopped talking to me. Is this my fault? I spoke what I believed was in the best interest of all parties involved, financially and morally.

SEES A MISTAKE IN FLORIDA

DEAR SEES: Sometimes, before we speak, it is wise to ask ourselves, "Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it kind?" While your comment was true, the girlfriend is already pregnant.

Financially, Kirk will be on the hook until his second child becomes an adult, whether or not he marries the mother, so I'm thinking what you said was neither helpful nor kind. If you want a relationship with your son, it may be time to apologize.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a lesbian who has been in a relationship for a year and a half. My partner was with men the majority of her life. One of her last exes is someone she now calls her best friend. She talks with and texts him every day. I now have trust issues with them because of something I saw four months ago.

I love a lot about her, except she's not very affectionate with me, and I need that. I knew when I was first getting involved with her that he was going to be in her life. They have no children tying them together, but we all go kayaking often. Although I'm not comfortable with it, she has given me no choice if I want to kayak with her. She also hides things from me, like when she buys him gifts.

How do I handle the jealousy I feel for him? I can't stand to be around him, because I know in my gut there is deception. But I don't want to lose all the good I have with her.

THREE'S A CROWD IN VIRGINIA

DEAR THREE'S A CROWD: What does "all the good you have with her" entail? What I gather from your letter is that you have spent a year and a half with someone who is bisexual, whom you don't completely trust, and who makes you feel like a third wheel.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

From where I sit, your jealousy is justified. Three in a relationship is awfully crowded, unless it's by mutual agreement. If you haven't talked to her about your feelings, you should. And if you can't arrive at a resolution, end your suffering and move on.

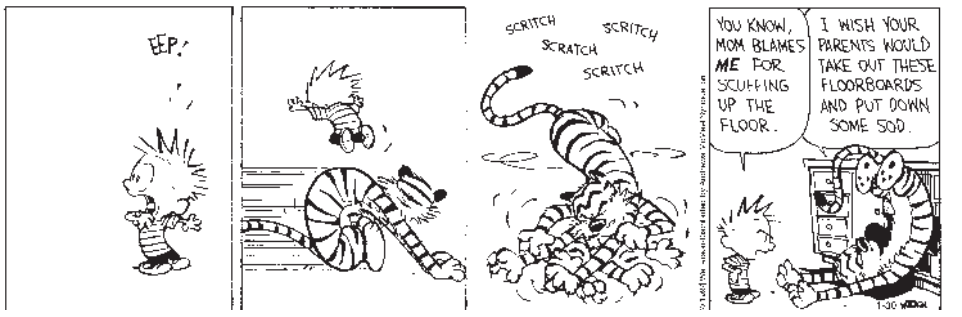
■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

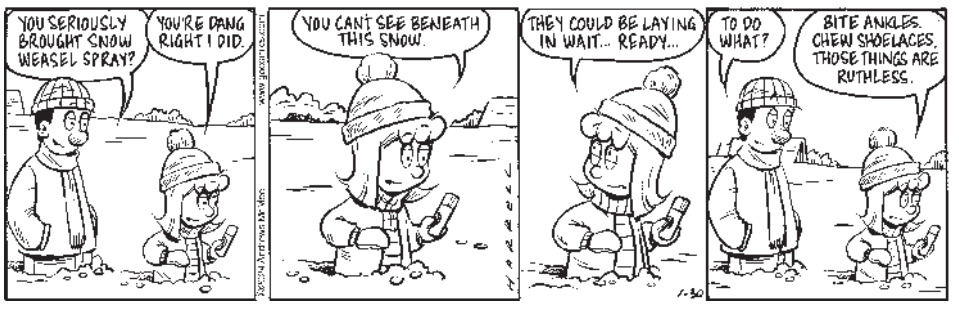

EEP!
SCRITCH SCRATCH SCRITCH SCRITCH
YOU KNOW, MOM BLAMES ME FOR SCUFFING UP THE FLOOR.
I WISH YOUR PARENTS WOULD TAKE OUT THESE FLOORBOARDS AND PUT DOWN SOME SOD.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


YOU SERIOUSLY BROUGHT SNOW WEASEL SPRAY?
YOU'RE DANG RIGHT I DID.
YOU CAN'T SEE BENEATH THIS SNOW.
THEY COULD BE LAYING IN WAIT... READY...
TO DO WHAT?
BITE ANKLES. CHEW SHOELACES. THOSE THINGS ARE RUTHLESS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HOW ARE WE DOING?
I HAVE NO ENERGY. I CAN'T MOTIVATE MYSELF TO GET ON THE GYM TREADMILL.
NURSE!
GO FILL THIS PILL BOTTLE WITH GERBIL FOOD.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Pundit's piece
5 Booty
9 JFK's veep
12 Docile
13 Actress Jessica
14 Motorist's org.
15 Richly upholstered seat
17 PC port
18 Sod
19 Stable moms
21 Regarding
24 London gallery
25 Deceitful person
26 Action film staple
30 Football's Manning
31 Mumbai dresses
32 Make lace
33 Crunchy party snack
35 Test version
36 Benefit
37 Valentine's gift
38 Discover
40 "Scram!"
42 Objectivist Rand
43 High-ranking magazine employee
48 Annoy
49 Grade sch.
50 Hotel chain
51 In medias —
52 Stitched
53 Frank

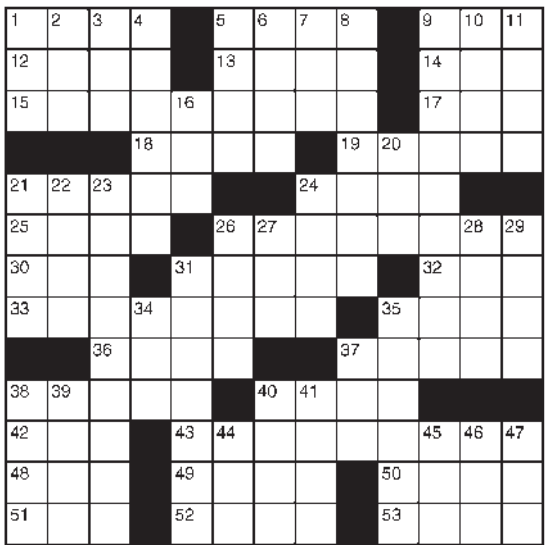
DOWN

1 Non-Rx
2 Chum
3 Big bird of Australia
4 Borrower
5 "Oz" cast member
6 Norwegian saint
7 Kimono sash
8 Airport areas
9 Nobel Prize winners
10 Pyramid part
11 Pokes
16 Mangy mutt
20 Sports fig.
21 Sir Guinness
22 Missile shelter
23 Alaskan city
24 Journey
26 "Let It Snow" lyricist
27 NPR's Shapiro
28 Fill fully
29 Some JFK guesses
31 Candle holders
34 Neither here — there
35 Sobbing sound
37 Sinbad's bird
38 Hideaway
39 Literary Jane
40 Gush
41 Church song
44 Yucatan "Bravo!"
45 Little rascal
46 Away from WSW
47 Shark feature

Solution time: 22 mins.

M	A	I	S		A	H	C		P	L	R	M
C	H	I	N	A	S	E	A		B	A	V	E
C	A	N	A	D	I	A	N		O	V	E	N
			R	D	S		T	I	M	F	R	S
A	S	H	E	S		P	E	R	P			
R	I	A	S		C	R	E	A	T	O	R	
A	B	S		R	A	I	N	S		N	A	Y
	S	H	R	I	N	F	S		I	Y	R	F
			E	A	T	S		S	A	X	E	S
S	O	M	A	I	I		W	A	G			
F	K	F	D		C	A	N	T	F	R	F	D
I	I	T	F		I	I	B	F	R	A	T	F
F	F	A	R		F	R	A		S	T	F	N

Yesterday's answer 1-30



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Wilmer Valderrama, 44; Christian Bale, 50; Phil Collins, 73; Charles S. Dutton, 73.

Happy Birthday: Laboring over things you cannot control wastes time. Set your sights on getting to the root of any dilemma that comes your way and massaging situations you can rectify. Revise contracts, subscriptions and money matters by working directly with institutions or authorities. Choosing to simplify your life will put your mind at ease, allowing you more time to enjoy life and loved ones. Your numbers are 8, 13, 25, 27, 33, 41, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Backtrack to understand a situation better. Put anger aside when dealing with people who can influence your future. Listen and offer reasonable and factual responses to precipitate the results you want to achieve. Be mindful and you'll come out on top. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Learn from mistakes, and you'll gain support to enforce change. Consider the costs involved mentally, emotionally and financially before you begin. Don't trust others to relay valid information. Go directly to the source for facts, and you'll make the right decision. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: You can wheel and deal, but recognize what's at stake and that whoever you deal with will do whatever is necessary to beat you at your own game. When in doubt, take a pass, regroup and start again. Don't take an unnecessary risk or debt. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Research, think and develop a plan that works for you and will be in your best interest. Don't feel you have to follow the crowd or make decisions to please someone else. Do what works for you, and you'll find a comfortable path forward. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Process what you want to achieve and turn your thoughts into a reality. Simple, affordable plans will bring excellent results that please those who rely on your judgment. Financial discipline and hard work will set an example for those you mentor. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Get out, stretch your legs, take a deep breath and start something meaningful. Don't feel you must overspend to impress when what you have to offer from the heart is plentiful. It's your choice to adjust what you don't like. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Don't overdo it when moderation is the best way forward. Get a second opinion if you don't like what you hear. Gathering information will help you get what you want or need at a price you can afford. Abandon a lofty proposal or unnecessary consumption. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Rely on those you trust to point you in the best direction. Talks will lead to positive change and more incredible opportunities. Use your imagination and determination to make changes that lead to peace of mind. Make health and relationships your priorities. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Study the logistics of any situation you face that will make your life easier and less stressful. Don't let anyone interfere or push you toward something that benefits them more than you. Finish what you start and do what's best for you. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Listen, but don't allow anyone to take advantage of you. Implement a domestic change to lower your overhead, not add debt. Use common sense and say no to temptation. Concentrate on what's doable and explore the best route forward. Make fitness and finances your priorities. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Listen to common sense and focus on cutbacks that make life manageable. Don't wait until it's too late. Address issues and you'll find solutions. Take the initiative, and you'll come up with workable solutions to any situation you encounter. Use your voice and experience to prosper. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Collaborate with like-minded individuals who feed your creative mind, and you'll discover a lucrative way to use your skills. Choose to partner with someone who brings out your best. The changes you enforce will lead to financial growth. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are intuitive, wise and thorough. You are charitable and diverse.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

5		6	7	2				
		1		3	9			7
	7			4	5	6		
	2		9		3		4	
				8			3	2
	3			5	2			1
7			5	6	4	3		
	8				7		6	
2	6			9	8	1	7	

Difficulty: ★★ 1/30

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	5	3	2	8	1	4	7	6
2	4	6	3	5	7	1	8	9
1	8	7	6	4	9	3	5	2
3	9	2	5	6	8	7	1	4
8	7	4	1	9	2	5	6	3
6	1	5	4	7	3	2	9	8
4	3	9	8	1	5	6	2	7
5	2	8	7	3	6	9	4	1
7	6	1	9	2	4	8	3	5

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Difficulty: ★ 1/29

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

THIGH-HIGH BOOTS Solution: 5 letters

H	E	M	L	I	N	E	S	S	E	G	N	I	R	F
I	E	F	A	S	H	I	O	N	O	L	Y	N	L	O
P	O	I	A	L	Y	H	C	U	O	L	S	A	E	O
B	T	Ⓢ	G	B	L	O	O	K	S	E	T	S	A	T
O	D	H	Ⓞ	H	R	A	S	S	D	E	K	N	T	W
O	N	E	S	Ⓛ	T	I	T	T	E	H	I	A	H	E
T	U	R	O	R	Ⓔ	O	C	N	Y	T	T	E	E	A
S	O	M	C	E	C	O	K	V	A	L	T	J	R	R
S	R	A	K	K	S	E	D	S	O	S	E	C	L	E
T	N	N	I	T	H	E	H	S	T	G	N	O	A	O
I	A	N	U	T	T	A	R	C	H	N	U	N	E	T
F	G	M	R	N	F	S	Q	U	A	R	E	E	P	P
T	E	E	I	T	I	E	S	T	H	G	I	T	P	E
U	V	O	P	U	L	L	O	N	M	U	T	U	A	E
O	P	E	N	T	O	E	M	R	O	F	T	A	L	P

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Appeal, Arch, Autumn, Cone, Costume, Fabric, Fashion, Fisherman, Flat, Footwear, Fringes, Heel, Height, Hemlines, Hip Boots, Jeans, Kitten, Leather, Looks, Nylon, Open Toe, Outfits, Over the Knee, Patent, Peep Toe, Platform, Pointed, Pull On, Round Toe, Satin, Shaft, Slouchy, Sock, Sole, Square, Stocking, Style, Tall, Ties, Tights, Vegan, Vogue

Yesterday's Answer: Maps

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Mahomes, Kelce headed back to Super Bowl after Chiefs shut down Ravens

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) holds up the Lamar Hunt Trophy next to Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce (87) after the AFC Championship NFL football game against the Baltimore Ravens, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Baltimore.

BALTIMORE (AP)—The first quarter was vintage Patrick Mahomes, picking apart the Baltimore defense with quick passes, with Travis Kelce on the other end of several of them.

Then the Kansas City defense—now elite after some shaky seasons in the past—took over.

Finally, when Mahomes needed one more completion to send the Chiefs back to the Super Bowl, he went deep to Marquez Valdes-Scantling, whose struggles this season were emblematic of the team's maligned receiving group.

Complete for 32 yards. Ballgame.

"The Chiefs are still the Chiefs," Kelce said emphatically.

After all the moments this season when they looked disjointed and vulnerable, the Chiefs are headed back to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in five years.

Mahomes and Kelce were at their magnificent best in the first half, and Kansas City's defense delivered another masterpiece against Lamar Jackson and the Ravens, leading the Chiefs to a 17-10 victory in the AFC championship game Sunday.

Kelce caught 11 passes for 116 yards and a touchdown, and now the big question at next month's Super Bowl in Las Vegas is whether his girlfriend, Taylor Swift, will be able to make it there in the middle of her tour. The pop star was on hand again Sunday, and it was a milestone day for the 34-year-old Kelce, who surpassed Jerry Rice's career record for postseason receptions.

Kansas City (14-6) will face San Francisco on Feb. 11, and a victory would make the Chiefs the first team to win it all in back-to-back seasons since the New England Patriots 19 years ago.

Swift's presence has turned the Chiefs into even more of a glamour team than they already were, but it's been more of a blue-collar performance on the field this season. Aside from Kelce, Mahomes' playmakers haven't been as threatening as in years past.

Only once this season has Kansas City scored more than 31 points, and a home loss on Christmas to the Las Vegas Raiders — on the same day Baltimore made a statement with a win at San Francisco — seemed to indicate that the Chiefs' days atop the AFC were numbered.

Not so fast.

Playing on the road in the playoffs for the first time with Mahomes, the Chiefs beat Buffalo and Baltimore in back-to-back weeks to win the conference.

"I've never doubted, no," coach Andy Reid said. "That's not how we roll."

The Chiefs led 17-7 at halftime, and Justin Tucker's 43-yard field goal with 2:34 to play was the only scoring of the second half. Baltimore kicked deep after that, and on third-and-9, Mahomes connected with Valdes-Scantling, who held on and knew exactly what that catch meant.

"We're going to the Super Bowl," he said. "That was it. I knew we needed one first down to get us to the goal, and they trusted me to go get one."

Mahomes went 30 of 39 for 241 yards and a touchdown.

Jackson could win his second MVP after leading Baltimore to the league's best record and point differential during the regular season, but the Ravens allowed touchdowns on the first two Kansas City possessions and appeared a bit panicky at times after that.

Baltimore (14-5) made undisciplined mistakes all game, while Kansas City looked the part of the team making its sixth straight appearance in the conference title game.

With the Ravens down by 10 in the third quarter, rookie Zay Flowers caught a 54-yard pass to the Kansas City 10 — then was flagged for taunting after the play. Moments later, he fumbled near the goal line and the Ravens ended up with no points.

That was one of several frustrating moments for Baltimore fans, whose city was hosting an AFC championship game for the first time since January 1971, when the Colts beat the Oakland Raiders.

Jackson went 20 of 37 for 272 yards and a touchdown, but Baltimore never really exploited its perceived advantage on the ground. Jackson raced under one of his own tipped passes in the first half for a 13-yard reception, but he also turned the ball over twice, including a forced pass into heavy coverage that was picked off in the end zone with 6:45 left in the game.

Once it was clear defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo had the upper hand against the Baltimore offense, Mahomes was happy to manage the game and avoid doing anything too risky.

"Spags, it seems like when the games get bigger, when the challenges get higher, he performs even better," Mahomes said.

Jackson fell to 2-4 as a starter in the postseason despite having been the top seed in the AFC twice. He made a few sensational individual plays, but the Ravens had trouble moving the ball otherwise.

"That guy was the main guy I was playing for, honestly," Ravens linebacker Patrick Queen said. "So much stuff he gets that he doesn't deserve. This was his opportunity to be able to write some of that stuff off and move on to the next thing. That's why it hurts, because you want to see people like that, teammates that you love and care about, get what they're supposed to get."

Mahomes, meanwhile, completed his first 11 pass attempts, and although the Ravens largely shut Kansas City down after that, the damage was done on a rainy day in Baltimore.

There was some chippy behavior before the game, which included Ravens defensive back Arthur Maulet and a group of Kansas City players having to be separated.

Then the Chiefs forced a three-and-out on the game's first drive and went 86 yards for the opening touchdown. Kelce caught a 13-yard pass from Mahomes over the middle on fourth-and-2. Then the star tight end beat All-Pro safety Kyle Hamilton for a 19-yard touchdown to make it 7-0.

49ERS 34, LIONS 31

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Brock Purdy and the San Francisco 49ers were on the brink, needing a spark to overcome a big deficit and avoid a third straight loss in the conference title game.

Brandon Aiyuk delivered with an improbable catch that helped save San Francisco's season.

Purdy's 51-yard pass that deflected off a defender's facemask into Aiyuk's hands helped the Niners rally from 17 points down at halftime to beat the Detroit Lions 34-31 on Sunday and reach the Super Bowl.

The 49ers (14-5) scored 17 points in an eight-minute span of the third quarter to tie the NFC championship game and then pulled away in the fourth quarter to earn a rematch against Kansas City after losing to the Chiefs in the Super Bowl four years ago.

"No one was rah-rah," Purdy said. "No one was freaking out. It's football. There's a lot of experienced guys on this team, veteran guys who have been in crazy situations. We were just like, 'We have to do our job.'"

San Francisco mounted the fourth comeback ever from 17 points down or more in a conference title game thanks to some big plays by Purdy and bad mistakes from the Lions (14-6), including two failed fourth downs in field-goal range. Detroit fell short of reaching the first Super Bowl in franchise history.

"We're not going out like this," coach Kyle Shanahan said of the mindset at halftime. "Guys didn't want today to be the last day. We put ourselves in a hole. They played like it in the second half and we were able to get the ball to bounce the right way and we made up for what we did in the first half."

After being questioned about whether he could lead a comeback, Purdy has now done it twice in as many weeks. He engineered a game-winning drive in the fourth quarter to beat Green Bay last week and then had an even bigger comeback against the Lions.

He finished with 267 yards passing and a touchdown, along with 48 yards rushing thanks to a pair of 21-yard scrambles. Now the last pick of the 2022 draft will be starting in the Super Bowl against Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs.

"All he's done since he's been here is play at an elite level," running back Christian McCaffrey said. "Everything starts with him. We're lucky he's our quarterback. He takes a lot of heat for absolutely no reason."

McCaffrey had two TD runs and little-used backup Elijah Mitchell scored on a 3-yard run to make it 34-24 with 3:02 to play as the Niners got over the conference title game hump after losing the past two seasons.

"There's been unfinished business for a while, man. Our team was set out for this for a long time," Shanahan said. "It's been a long year to get to this point, and we got it done today. It was hard at the beginning, but the character we have in our team, the type of guys we have, we can't wait to get to Vegas, man."

The Niners blew a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the NFC championship game against the Los Angeles Rams two years ago and then were forced to play much of last year's title game loss at Philadelphia without a functioning quarterback after Purdy injured his elbow on the opening drive and fourth-stringer Josh Johnson left with a concussion early in the third quarter.

But San Francisco managed to make the long journey back to this stage and now is in position to deliver the franchise its record-tying sixth Super Bowl title and first since the 1994 season.

A magical season for the Lions ended in heartbreak. Detroit remains the only team to play every season of the Super Bowl era without reaching the ultimate game. This looked like it could be the year to end that drought when Detroit won back-to-back playoff games after winning just one in the previous 56 seasons.

But the Lions couldn't finish the job despite holding a 24-7 halftime lead.

"When you lose that way, it's hard," coach Dan Campbell said. "You feel like you get your heart ripped out. But I'm proud of that group and I'll go anywhere with that group."

San Francisco settled for a field goal on the opening drive of the second half before the game completely flipped in a four-minute span.

Campbell opted to go for it on fourth-and-2 from the San Francisco 28, but Josh Reynolds couldn't hold onto a pass from Jared Goff, leading to a turnover on downs.

The Lions then seemed to have a potential interception when Purdy's deep pass bit Kindle Vildor in the face mask, but the ball popped up and was caught for a spectacular 51-yard gain by Aiyuk.

"When I saw him catch that, I was like that's insane," Purdy said.

Purdy found Aiyuk three plays later for a 6-yard score.

"Before the game, a ladybug landed on my shoe. And you all know what that means," Aiyuk said. "That's all I can say. Other than that, I don't know."

Jahmyr Gibbs then fumbled on the next play from scrimmage, setting up a 1-yard run by McCaffrey to tie the game at 24.

It only got worse from there for the Lions with Reynolds dropping another pass on third down, leading to a punt that Detroit had a chance to down at the 1 but botched.

Purdy then drove the Niners to a 33-yard field goal by Jake Moody and their first lead of the game.

"Momentum certainly changed pretty quickly," Goff said. "They scored, we didn't convert the fourth down, they scored again, we turned the ball over. That little sequence right there makes it tough."

Magic pull away in 4th quarter to beat Booker, Suns

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Paolo Banchero scored 26 points and the Orlando Magic beat the Phoenix Suns 113-98 on Sunday night, overcoming Devin Booker's 44-point effort two days after he had 62 in a loss at Indiana.

Phoenix went more than eight minutes between field goals in the fourth quarter and scored only four points in the last 10 minutes, losing its second straight after a seven-game winning streak.

The Magic's defensive shutdown was accomplished with a lineup that included the 6-10 Banchero, 6-10 Franz Wagner, 6-11 Moritz Wagner and 6-11 Jonathan Isaac.

"A lot of teams aren't built the way they are. They're a massive team," Phoenix coach Frank Vogel said. "You can attack them if you do it the right way. We didn't do it well enough or handle their pressure well enough tonight."

Booker was 17 of 26 from the field and hit 9 of 11 free throws. But he had only two points in the fourth quarter.

"They were playing a physical game the whole game," said Booker, who is averaging 41 points over his last six games. "I think after the start we had they just reverted to being extra physical and hoping they can't call every foul."

The Suns shot 5 for 18 with seven turnovers in a 13-point fourth quarter.

"I don't think anybody's probably done that all year to them," said Isaac, who had two of the Magic's seven blocks. "For us to get it done like that, especially with the way Booker was rolling, to kind of shut them up in the fourth quarter, it's amazing."

Moritz Wagner came off the bench with 16 points and 12 rebounds in 23 minutes.

"What Mo did was give us extra possessions on the offensive glass," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said. "I don't think (people) realize how important that is in a game like this, against an elite scoring team, when you get extra possessions."

Kevin Durant, limited to 12 shots, had 15 points and seven of the Suns' 23 turnovers.

"I wasn't very smart with the ball," he said. "I lead by example by doing stuff like that, and that kind of messed the whole game up. I just think that sets a bad precedent for the team and everybody feeds off of that, and it just snowballs off that. Really that's what lost the game."

The Suns made 18 of their first 24 shots, including a long jumper by Durant that gave them a 13-point lead at the start of the second quarter.

Booker finished his 21-point third quarter by scoring the Suns' final seven points, but as he sat out the first four minutes of the fourth quarter, the Magic moved ahead.

A 3-pointer by Franz Wagner put the Magic up 97-92 just after Booker got back into the game, and another 3-pointer by Isaac made it 104-94 with 3:59 left.

The Suns shot 56% overall, but took only 14 threes, 18 below their season average.

We forced the into the tough, contested twos with sometimes three hands on them," Mosley said.

Phoenix center Jusuf Nurkic sat out because of a sprained left thumb.

AP

Orlando Magic center Moritz Wagner (21) celebrates after a score as Phoenix Suns guard Bradley Beal (3) looks on during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Orlando, Fla.

LeBron makes NBA All-Star team for record 20th time, Durant for 14th time

LeBron James joined yet another exclusive club, and he'll have plenty of familiar faces alongside him at the NBA All-Star Game.

James is an All-Star—and an All-Star starter—for the 20th time, with the league unveiling the results of this season's starter balloting on Thursday night. James is the first 20-time All-Star in NBA history. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, whose career scoring record was broken by James last season, was a 19-time selection.

The game is Feb. 18 in Indianapolis.

Joining James in the Western Conference starting lineup: Phoenix's Kevin Durant, Denver's Nikola Jokic, Dallas' Luka Doncic and Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the league's leader in 30-point games this season who edged perennial All-Star starter Stephen Curry of Golden State for the final West backcourt spot. Durant is a 14-time selection, one of only 11 players in NBA history to be picked that many times.

In the Eastern Conference, Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo will be joined by Boston's Jayson Tatum and Philadelphia's Joel Embiid—the reigning NBA MVP, two-time defending scoring champion and current NBA scoring leader—in the frontcourt. Tatum set an All-Star Game record last season, scoring 55 points in Salt Lake City on the way to MVP honors.

The East guards are Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton—who'll be a starter on his home floor—and Milwaukee's Damian Lillard.

"You never want to take it for granted, right?" Tatum told TNT, which broadcast the unveiling of the starters before Boston's game in Miami. "There's 450 guys in the league and for the fans to consistently vote me, it's truly an honor. It's something I don't take for granted. I grew up wanting to be in All-Star weekend every year and to live out that dream in real time is pretty cool."

Among the notables not picked as starters: Curry, Boston's Jaylen Brown, New York's Jalen Brunson, Atlanta's Trae Young, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell, Miami's Bam Adebayo, the Los Angeles Lakers' Anthony Davis, Orlando's Paolo Banchero, Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox, Phoenix's Devin Booker, the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard, Philadelphia's Tyrese Maxey and Minnesota's Anthony Edwards.

"This means the world to me," Haliburton said. "Shout out to all the fans, my peers, and the media for the love that I've received, and I'm excited to represent the organization, especially with the event here in Indiana this year. I can't wait to share this weekend with everyone who played a part in helping me achieve this honor."

Curry—who is likely to be picked as an All-Star reserve—evidently has plans for at least one event in Indianapolis over All-Star weekend. He was wired with a microphone for Golden State's game Thursday night against Sacramento and had a discussion with Warriors teammate Brandin Podziemski about Sabrina Ionescu, who scored 37 points in the WNBA's 3-point contest last summer. That topped Curry's NBA 3-point contest best of 31.

"I think I've got to challenge her," Curry said.

Ionescu responded on social media: "Let's gettttt it!! See ya at the 3 pt line." Ionescu posed for a photo imitating Curry's famous lights-out pose while holding her trophy at the WNBA All-Star event and challenged him to a "shoot out."

The All-Star starters are selected through a formula where fan voting counts for 50%, voting by players themselves counts for 25% and voting by a panel of writers and broadcasters who cover the NBA counts for the other 25%. Antetokounmpo was the top overall vote-getter, collecting about 5.4 million from fans.

"Thanks to the fans, media and most importantly my peers for voting me into my 14th all star game," Durant wrote on social media. "Can't wait to lock in and hoop with some of the greatest ever in Indy."

The reserves, to be announced on Feb. 1, are chosen in a vote of the league's head coaches. Any additions to the rosters, should a player be unable to participate because of injury or another reason, will be made by Commissioner Adam Silver.

There are very few players in the U.S. major pro sports to be selected as an All-Star, or its equivalent, in 20 different seasons. James is the first to have that distinction in the NBA. He joins hockey's Gordie Howe and a trio of baseball players—Hank Aaron, Willie Mays and Stan Musial.

Howe was a 23-time pick for the NHL All-Star Game. Aaron was a Major League Baseball All-Star in 21 seasons, while Mays and Musial were chosen in 20 seasons each. Mickey Mantle played in 20 All-Star games over 16 seasons as a selection; some baseball seasons featured two All-Star contests.

This year's All-Star Game goes back to the traditional East-vs.-West format, which was utilized in the first 66 NBA midseason classics. The most recent six saw the leading vote-getters from each conference serve as captains who got to draft their teams; James served as one of the captains all six times, with Antetokounmpo the other captain three times, Durant twice and Curry once.

But that format is gone, as is the "target score" format that featured an untimed fourth quarter in the last four All-Star Games. League officials said entering the season that they have been stressing to players the importance of improving the quality of the All-Star Game after last year's game drew the worst television numbers since such metrics were charted.

HAWKS 126, RAPTORS 125

ATLANTA (AP)—Saddiq Bey dunked off Trae Young's miss with 1.1 seconds left to lift Atlanta past Toronto.

Bey finished with a season-high 26 points and had 13 rebounds. Young had 30 points and 12 assists, and Clint Capela finished with 19 points and 14 rebounds.

Jordan Nwora had 24 points and nine rebounds for Toronto. The short-handed Raptors have lost five straight.

PISTONS 120, THUNDER 104

DETROIT (AP)—Jalen Duren had 22 points and a career-high 21 rebounds and Detroit beat Oklahoma City to end the Thunder's winning streak at five.

Jaden Ivey added 19 points to help the NBA-worst Pistons improve to 6-40. Detroit played without leading scorer Cade Cunningham because of what the team termed "injury management." Cunningham returned from a knee injury Saturday.

Duren' had a career-high nine of Detroit's 15 offensive rebounds.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 31 points.

BULLS 104, TRAIL BLAZERS 96

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—DeMar DeRozan had 20 points and Chicago beat Portland to snap a two-game losing streak.

Coby White added 15 points and 10 assists, and Andre Drummond also had 15 points.

Jerami Grant led Portland with 24 points, and Deandre Ayton had 22 and 12 rebounds. The Blazers have lost four of their last five.

PACERS 116, GRIZZLIES 110

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)5—Bennedict Mathurin scored 24 points, Jalen Smith made the go-ahead 3-pointer and Indiana beat Memphis.

Smith made it 110-107 with his 3-pointer with 3:10 remaining. He finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Pascal Siakam also had 19 points.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 25 points.

Sinner beats Medvedev to clinch his first Grand Slam title

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Jannik Sinner lined up a forehand, drilled it down the line and dropped to the court on his back, giving himself some moments to process how he'd managed to come back from two sets down to win his first Grand Slam title.

The 22-year-old Sinner found a way to turn defense into attack in his first major final and take the Australian Open title from Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday.

"I like to dance in the pressure storm," he said of his seemingly serene approach to the most tense moments. "I like it, because that's where most of the time I bring out my best tennis."

It was his third straight win over a top 5 player after his quarterfinal victory over Andrey Rublev and his semifinal upset that ended No. 1-ranked Novak Djokovic's long domination of the tournament. Only Djokovic and Roger Federer have done that previously in a major played on hard courts.

So he's in great company.

Sinner is the first Italian to win the Australian Open and the youngest winner in a men's final here since Djokovic won his first Grand Slam title in 2008.

AP

Jannik Sinner of Italy holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup aloft after defeating Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, in Melbourne, Australia, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024.

With Carlos Alcaraz winning Wimbledon last year and Sinner winning the season-opening major, a generation shift is arriving.

"I still have to process it, because ... beating Novak in the semis and then today Daniil in the final, they are tough players to beat," Sinner said. "It's a great moment for me and my team. But in the other way, we also know that we have to improve if we want to have another chance to hold a big trophy again."

Sinner's success has lit a tennis fuse in Italy, where his run to the ATP Finals championship match and leading role in the Davis Cup title win in November captured the country's attention. The night time final in Australia made for pre-lunch viewing in Italy.

For 2021 U.S. Open champion Medvedev, the loss was his fifth in six major finals. The third-seeded Medvedev set a record with his fourth five-set match of the tournament and time on court at a major in the Open era, his 24 hours and 17 minutes surpassing Carlos Alcaraz's 23:40 at the 2022 U.S. Open.

He's also the first in the Open era to lose two Grand Slam finals in five sets after taking a 2-0 lead.

Medvedev lost back-to-back Australian Open finals—to Djokovic in 2021 and to Rafael Nadal after holding a two-set lead the following year.

Sinner only dropped one set through six rounds—in a third-set tiebreaker against 10-time Australian Open champion Djokovic—until he lost two straight to Medvedev.

It wasn't until a break in the sixth game of the fifth set that he really had a full grip on his first Grand Slam title.

In two of Medvedev's five-set matches—a second-round win over Emil Ruusuvuori that finished at almost 4 in the morning, and a 4-hour, 18-minute semifinal win over No. 6 Alexander Zverev—he had to come back from two sets down. Nobody had done that on the way to an Australian Open final since Pete Sampras in 1995.

Against Sinner, he started like man who wanted to win points quickly.

Standing closer to the baseline to receive serve and going to the net more regularly than usual, he broke in the third game and took the first set in 36 minutes.

He had two more service breaks in the fourth and sixth games of the second set but was broken himself at 5-1 trying to serve it out. He was successful next try.

The third set went with serve until the 10th game, when Medvedev was a point from leveling at 5-5 until three forehand errors gave Sinner the set, and the momentum.

He won the fourth set, again with a service break in the 10th game, recovering immediately to win three points after mis-hitting a forehand so far out that it shocked the Rod Laver Arena crowd.

And so the tournament equaled a Grand Slam Open era record set at the 1983 U.S. Open with a 35th match going to five sets.

In the sixth game of the fifth set, Sinner had triple breakpoint against a fatiguing Medvedev. He missed with his first chance but converted with his next, a forehand winner, for a 4-2 lead. From there, he didn't give Medvedev another chance.

Medvedev had faced either Djokovic or Rafael Nadal in all five of his previous major finals. He beat Djokovic to win the 2021 U.S. Open title but lost all the others.

The 27-year-old Russian has been saying through the tournament that he has more stamina than he used to, and is mentally stronger in the tough five-setters. He certainly showed incredible endurance but came up just short—again.

Medvedev won his first six career meetings with Sinner, but has now lost four in a row—including three finals.

"I want to congratulate Jannik ... you showed it again why you deserve it," Medvedev said. "Probably that's not your last Grand Slam, but I hope I can try to get the next one if you play in the final."

Medvedev also sent a message to his family and supporters.

"Unfortunately I couldn't make it today, but I'm going to try to make it work next time for you," he said. "It always hurts to lose in the final, but probably being in the final is better than losing before."

INDESTRUCTIBLE

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to decide the game with both teams' bats continuing to be hotter than the cool January evening. The Dodgers kept pace with the Pirates as they held on for dear life to their shrinking lead.

Seven runs would score for the Pirates in the sixth to boost their lead to 19-10, but the Dodgers weren't swayed and the top of their order scored five consecutive runs to make it 19-15.

The Pirates' pitching staff held on though as J.J. Laniyo took them home to victory after allowing only one more Dodgers run to score in the seventh.

Maratita had a solid game of four hits in five at-bats, scoring two RBIs and three runs, and hitting one double. Lefty Eric Palacios was right there with him when he went four-for-four, scored three runs, and four RBIs.

The Dodgers had a productive lineup but just couldn't cut it against the Pirates, with Norita going 4-for-4, scoring four runs, four RBIs, and one double on top of his home run. Glen Camacho, the league's leading batter last Jan. 22, went 3-for-4, scored two runs, had four RBIs, and hit one double.

There's only two more weeks of regular season play before the start of the playoffs on Feb. 13 and Feb. 14. The championship series is slated for Feb. 19, 21, and if needed, Feb. 23.

DOLPHINS

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Shakir Takir. Their coach is Don Cabrera.

The Father Duenas Memorial School roster was made up of Jacob Toves, Landon Miles, Beau Perez, Samuel Stenson, Sean Halehale, Gio DeVera, Donovan Moss, Erwin Manibusan, Ian Dickson, Kian Rivera, Nicolas Chargualaf, Arthur Manglona, Aaron Lupola, Malcolm Ogo, Mason Manibusan and Kaynin McIntosh. They are coached by Guam's Chief Justice Robert Torres.

Although the match ended in a tie, the perpetual trophy went home to Guam. The PSS Athletics Program hopes there will be another friendly match between Guam in the future.

BDE

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inning with runs scored by Oly Fritz, Tudela, and Iggy to make it 4-1.

Both teams actually struggled in the fifth and sixth inning as they went scoreless, but the Lady Blue Jays couldn't rally against BDE pitcher Jovie Omar. BDE scored one more in the fifth and the Lady Blue Jays went down in order in their last at-bat for a 5-2 final.

In other results, the 670 Magas Babes defeated Lady Sufa, 14-4. The Babes overpowered Lady Sufa from the second inning when they tied the game up, 2-2.

Lady Sufa's Bong Babauta scored the third run in the third inning and Angela Muna scored the last run in the fourth, and that was all they wrote. In contrast, the Babes piled on the runs as they scored three in the third, five in the fifth, and three more in the last inning.

Lastly, Bat & Boujee scraped past Boleras, 13-12. Boleras blew their 12-2 lead when Bat & Boujee went on to rally in the fourth inning. Bat & Boujee pitcher Janice Celis started off their offensive when she scored and ended with a run by Virlie Secharmidal.

Bat & Boujee didn't stop there and went on to score five more runs, which was just enough to win by one as the Boleras bats went silent for the rest of the game.

Results of the men's division will be posted in the issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

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Dolphins, Friars end friendlies in stalemate

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marianas High School Dolphins and Guam's Father Duenas Memorial School Friars ended their friendly soccer match in a 0-0 stalemate last Wednesday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marianas High School Dolphins and Guam's Father Duenas Memorial School Friars soccer teams pose for a group photo after their friendly match last Wednesday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The Dolphins recently won the NMIFA-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Soccer League 2023-2024 championship against Saipan International School, while the Friars won the Independent Interscholastic Athletic Association of Guam championship against the Harvest Christian Academy Eagles last December.

Lawrence E. Camacho, Public School System Athletics Program coordinator/commissioner, said the competition was good, but unfortunately MHS player Paul Lizama was injured. Other than that, both teams played with everything they got and showed off why both teams were champions in their home islands.

Camacho said that the Friars reached out to the PSS Athletics Program to coordinate the friendly match, and with the help of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association, made it happen.

The MHS roster consisted of Terell Hix-Kileleman, Isiah Hossain, Mark Costales, Leland Deleon Guerrero, Anthony Bergancia, Paul Lizama, Zhi Xiang Lin, Wataru Kadokura, Tyler Omelau, Andrew Sablan, Emerson Brillo, Cody Shimizu, Kristoffer Pascual, Pritom Sen, Jereme Quimzon, Minul Hoque, Takeru Jim, Rooney Gil, Espiritu Prince and

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BDE hands Lady Blue Jays' first loss, 5-2

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Team BDE handed the defending champs Lady Blue Jays their first loss, 5-2, in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association women's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

The Lady Blue Jays came into this season with some new players in their lineup and as of late has struggled to produce runs. They scored their only two runs in the first inning by Destiny Pangelinan and in the fourth inning by Kiana Camacho.

Meanwhile, BDE scored one in the first inning from Kona Tudela and they quickly took the lead in the third

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LEIGH GASES

BDE shortstop Becky Repeki throws the ball in during their game against the Lady Blue Jays in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association women's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

Indestructible Pirates escape Dodgers, 21-16

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The undefeated Pirates have racked up their ninth straight win as they went head-to-head against the No. 2 Dodgers last Thursday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

Both teams put on quite a show as the game had the air of a postseason game—with two of the best teams in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League duking it out—and the Pirates came out on top once again, 21-16.

The game had it all—from home runs to perfect at-bats, injuries, and arguments—topped off with the Pirates' unblemished record on the line.

The Pirates had the first laugh—and eventually the last, when they scored six runs in the first inning off of the Dodgers' Jeff Cruz. The Dodgers answered back quickly though with a lead off solo homer by Bruce Norita in the second inning to get in the game. Two more runs scored and the Pirates' lead was cut in half, 3-6.

Mark Toves of the Pirates started things off in the second when he got on base from a single and scored later in the inning. Then Pete Sablan got a free pass to first and was brought home by Audie Maratita. They went on to be shut down in the third as the Dodgers were playing catchup, and at the end of the third, the game was 9-5 still in favor of the Pirates.

Maratita went on a hot streak as he hit a double in the fourth, followed by another double by Jerome Delos Santos for four runs in that inning. The Dodgers did not want to be silent and scored five of their own for a close 12-10 Pirates lead.

The fifth and sixth inning seemed

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LEIGH GASES

Pirates pitcher Bill Camacho readies himself before a pitch against the Dodgers in a thrilling game of the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League's Top 2 teams last Thursday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.